

The Atlantic Monthly

NOVEMBER 1996

# THE PRICE OF IMMIGRATION

**Can we still afford  
to be a nation of  
immigrants?  
A view from the  
perspectives  
of history and  
economics**

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# Atlantic Monthly

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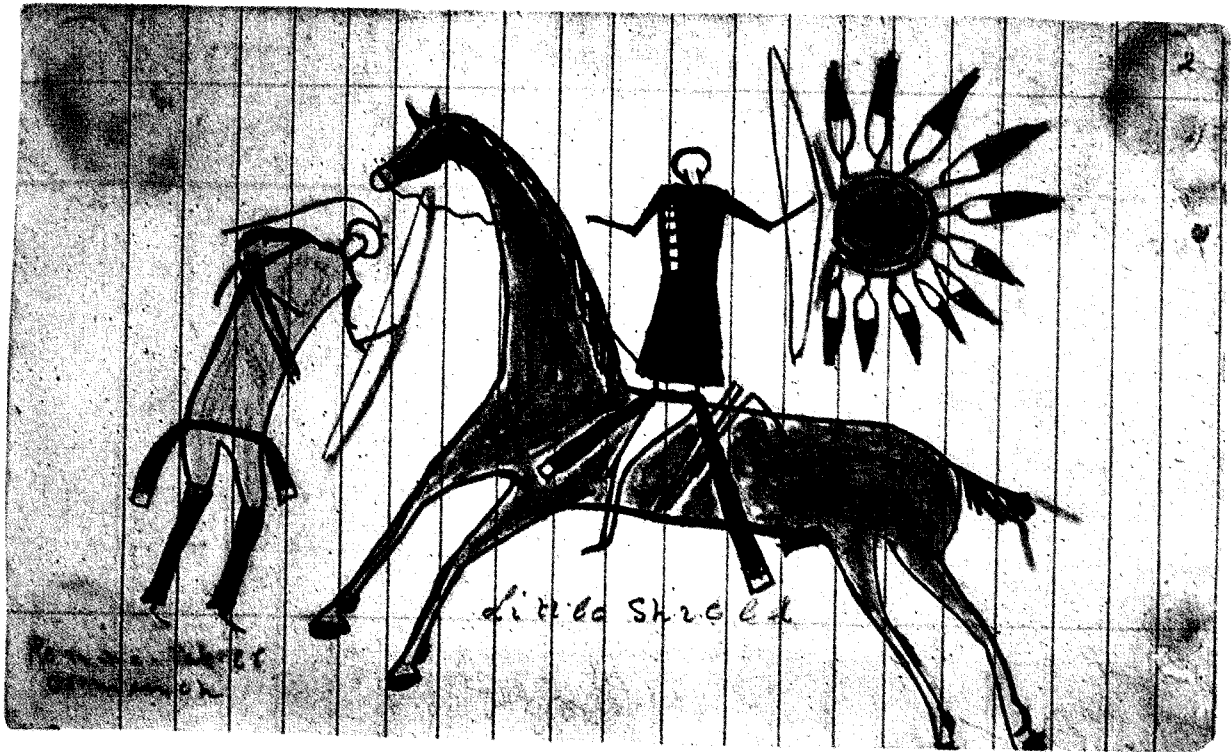
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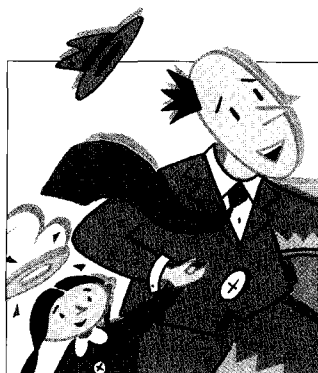
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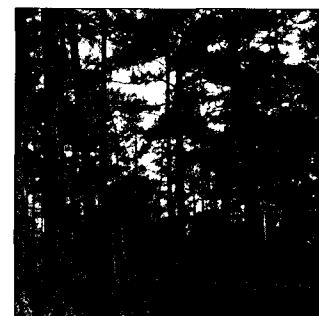




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SOME of the reporting and analysis in *The Atlantic Monthly* involves events that have achieved a form of closure; much more often, however, we present stories in progress, later episodes of which cannot always be covered in these pages. But two recent articles warrant updates, in part because they appear to have made a difference.

In "Female Circumcision Comes to America" (October, 1995) Linda Burstyn profiled African activists working to persuade immigrant communities in the United States to end the hideous procedure that has been inflicted on more than 100 million women and girls around the world. In September, on the last day of the 104th Congress, legislation criminalizing the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) when performed in this country on girls under the age of eighteen cleared the final obstacles on Capitol Hill and was signed into law by President Clinton. Meanwhile, the U.S. Board of Immigration Appeals has acted in the matter of a young Togolese woman, Fauziya Kassindja, who in 1994 fled her country to escape FGM, seeking political asylum in the United States—only to spend the next sixteen months in detention centers. Burstyn, writing in *The Washington Post* last March, publicized Kassindja's plight, which brought the case national media attention. The appeals board, citing a report stating that

women in Africa may face "threats or acts of physical violence or social ostracization for refusing to undergo this harmful traditional practice," ruled that Kassindja was entitled to political asylum—and set a strong precedent.

Eric Schlosser's "In the Strawberry Fields" (November, 1995) described an insidious form of sharecropping that exists in the strawberry industry and the condition of near debt peonage in which many strawberry workers find themselves trapped. Last April the United Farm Workers officially began organizing strawberry pickers in some of the areas that Schlosser visited. The U.S. Department of Labor has prepared an amendment to the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act that would more explicitly define "employer" and "employee"—definitions that would have important ramifications for the issue of sharecropping in agriculture of all kinds. The article was a finalist this year for the National Magazine Award in the category of reporting, and in May, Schlosser received the prestigious Sidney Hillman Foundation Award for investigative journalism relating to social justice and public policy.

Both these articles are available in *The Atlantic Monthly's* interactive editions, on the America Online network (keyword: Atlantic) and on the World Wide Web (<http://www.TheAtlantic.com>). —THE EDITORS

### CONTRIBUTORS

**Christina Adam** ("Horse Heaven Hills") has lived on a mountain ranch for eleven years. Her new collection of short stories, *Sleeping With the Buffalo*, will be published this winter.

**Guy Billout** ("The Digital Age") has received many awards for his magazine and advertising work, including gold and silver medals from the Society of Illustrators.

**George J. Borjas** ("The New Economics of Immigration"), a professor of public policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, at Harvard University, is the author of *Friends or Strangers: The Impact of Immigrants on the U.S. Economy* (1990) and *Labor Economics* (1996).

**Lynn Caraganis** ("My Sex Mentors") is the author of *Garish Days* (1988) and *Cousin It* (1991).

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**David M. Kennedy** ("Can We Still Afford to Be a Nation of Immigrants?") is the Donald J. McLachlan Professor of History at Stanford University, and was the Harmsworth Professor of American History at Oxford University in the past academic year.

**Nicholas Lemann** ("A Cartoon Elite") is *The Atlantic's* national correspondent and the author of *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (1991). He is at

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**Thomas Lux** ("Torn Shades") teaches writing at Sarah Lawrence College and is the author of *Split Horizon* (1994).

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**Mary Anne Weaver** ("India's Bandit Queen") is a staff writer for *The New Yorker* who has written extensively about South Asia and the Middle East. She lived in New Delhi from 1982 through 1985.



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## LETTERS

### Gap Politics

**R**e Steven Stark's "Gap Politics," (July *Atlantic*): I know of no conclusive historical evidence that "this country long defined its politics by sex far more than did other industrialized nations." But this is a catchy way to open a paragraph. Most of the other "firsts" or sweeping generalizations Stark provides are equally questionable as interpretation or fact. The "first recorded gender gap" in this country probably showed up during early sessions of the Continental Congress, when Abigail Adams's much quoted 1776 appeal to John Adams to "Remember the Ladies" (referring to the lack of rights of married women) and Hanna Lee Corbin's 1777 request to her brother Richard Henry Lee to support voting rights for tax-paying widows were both ignored by those two founders—and no doubt by all others at the time.

Most important, the Equal Rights Amendment was lost in part owing to the tactical and logistic ineptness of the National Organization for Women but primarily owing to the conservative backlash that set in after the 1973 Paris peace accords. Like previous reform movements in postwar periods, the women's and civil-rights movements could not counter this general backlash. Failure to pass the ERA had little to do with the "anti-majoritarian" aspects of the national legislation that Congress passed under the influence of an eastern-corridor group of female reformers. Likewise, "upper-middle-class activists" were not exclusively focused on abortion before or after *Roe v. Wade*, for the simple reason that they were the very women who had been able to obtain safe illegal abortions before 1973. Wages and child care were not slighted because of an overemphasis on abortion by liberal women (granted, conservative women overemphasized it), as can be seen in the impressive pieces of economic, civil-rights, and child-care legislation passed by Congress beginning in

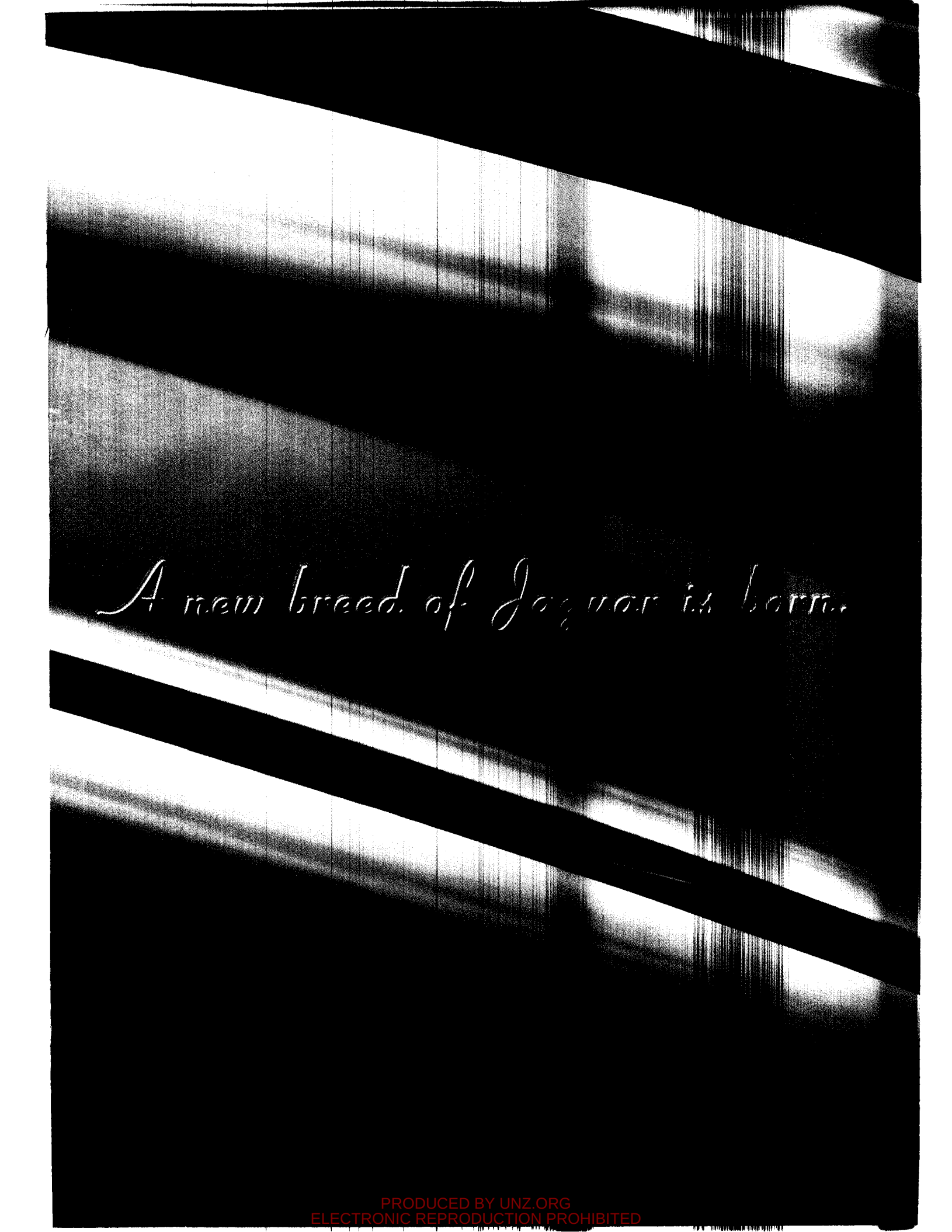
1963 and continuing through the 1970s, to say nothing of Supreme Court decisions before and after *Roe* favoring women's economic equality—cases often argued and won by feminist attorneys. The first and most numerous cases brought by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission involving women since the early 1970s have concerned wage discrimination, and both political parties supported quality day care in the 1972 election (even Richard Nixon's unsuccessful welfare-reform bills included federally funded child-care facilities).

Women continue to be disadvantaged in the United States, while men, despite their misplaced anger at affirmative action, continue to be privileged—in all race and class categories. Disadvantaged people always hold views that differ from those of the privileged, however complicated their behavior may appear. Although the men's movement in the United States is mentioned only in the last paragraph, the entire article is based on thinly disguised masculine cultural theory.

Joan Hoff  
New York, N.Y.

**S**teven Stark's article about gender politics is thought-provoking, though readers should keep a few things in mind.

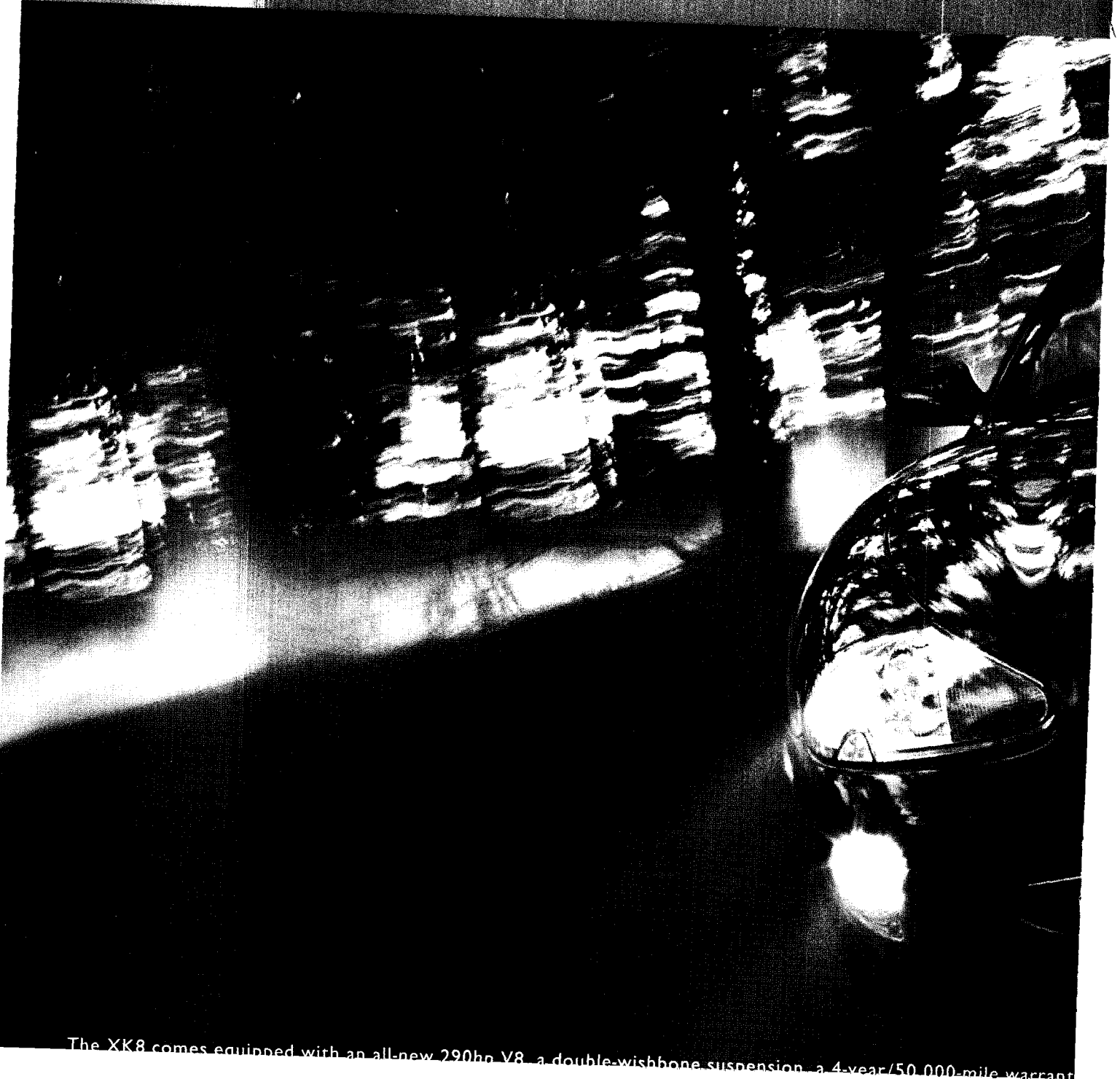
1) In the 1994 congressional elections, in which Stark suggests the gap was pronounced, 57 percent of men voted Republican, as compared with 46 percent of women. This does sound like a large disparity, and it is larger than what has occurred before. Nonetheless, let's look at the numbers from the other side: 46 percent of the female population voted Republican, along with the majority of men. 2) Over the years voting preferences have followed economic status much more than gender, and I would argue that it is that trend we now see displayed in the growing gap between men's and women's voting preferences. The more women become (or perceive they have become) members of the underclass, the



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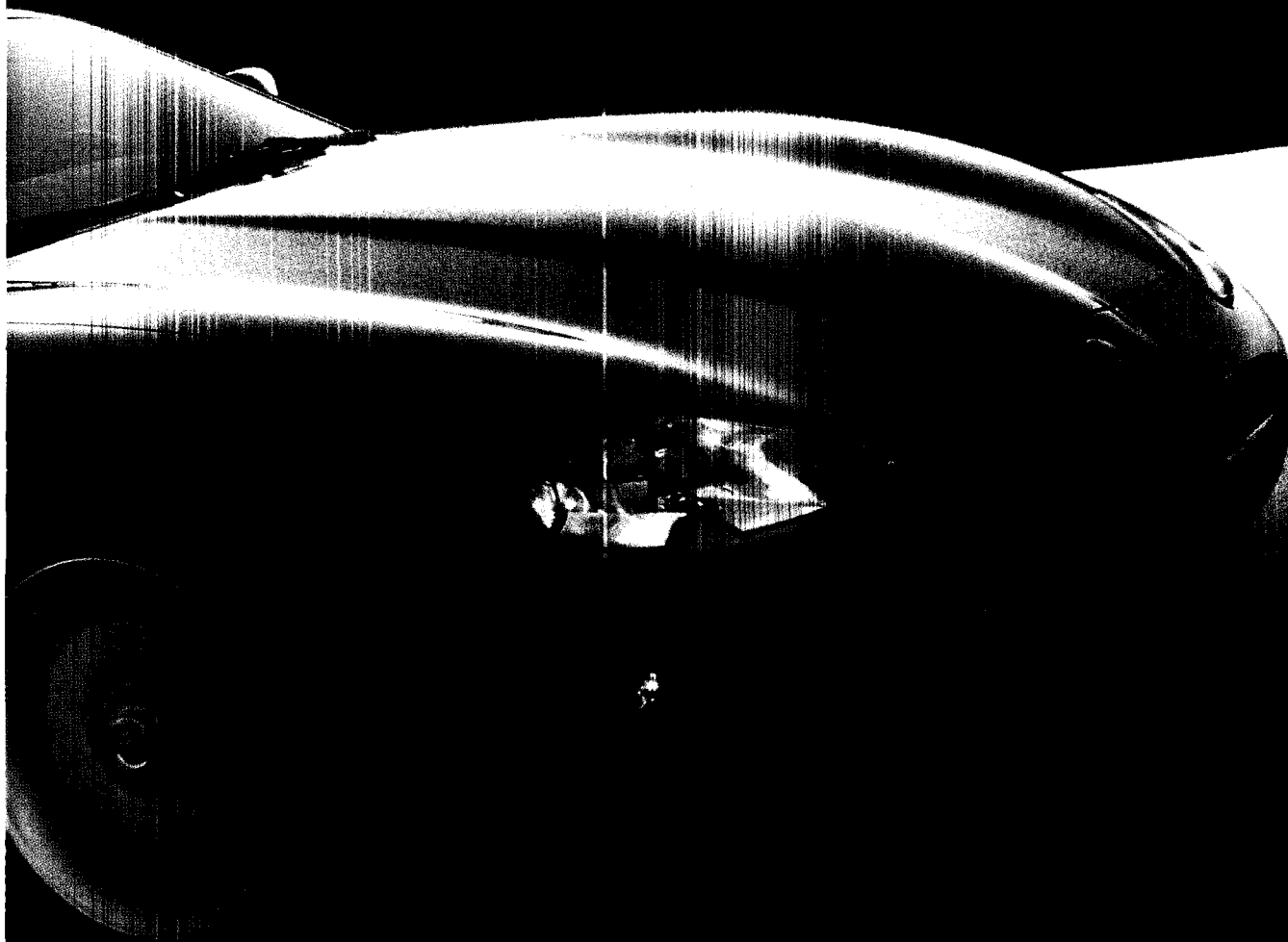
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poverty class, or simply the lower-income working class, the more likely they are to vote Democratic.

3) The reported "white male revolt" is more white than it is male. The black-white gap in voting behavior is huge. Republican candidates never even get into two-figure percentages with black voters. Appreciation for the role of government and adherence to the Democratic Party are nearly monolithic in the black political community. If and when the black-white voting gap closes to the current 22 percent gender gap that Stark points to with dismay, there will be jubilation in the streets! Pundits will crow about how far we've come and how close we finally are in the reconciliation of the races.

In short, the gender wars are not here, though the media and political consultants dearly wish it so. Most women vote like most men on most issues.

**Joan Adams**  
*New York, N.Y.*

*Steven Stark replies:*

Joan Adams makes a good point: More men and women vote alike than vote differently, and the economic-status and racial gaps are far larger than the ones between the sexes. What makes the recent gender gap different and interesting is that its rise was unforeseen, and it seems to be far more important to our current political debate and the two parties' agendas than the numbers themselves might indicate. This may have the odd effect, as I pointed out in the piece, of widening the gap in coming years and ironically benefiting the "male party"—the Republicans.

## Breast Cancer

I am sorry that *The Atlantic* published David Plotkin's article "Good News and Bad News About Breast Cancer" (June *Atlantic*). Disseminating this type of biased polemic in a lay periodical has the potential to misinform thousands of women whose health and in some cases lives will be jeopardized.

The vast majority of the increase in breast-cancer incidence relates to an aging population and mammographic technology. The number of menstrual periods that women experienced prior to the Industrial Revolution is unknown. What is clear, however, is that a contemporary woman

will live longer than a medieval one did, on a statistical basis, by approximately forty years, and this clearly has more to do with her risk, menstruating or not.

The proportion of highly aggressive as opposed to slow-growing, less aggressive breast cancers being detected has not changed because of menstrual activity. Most important, the aggressive carcinomas have not disproportionately diminished in number, so this does not explain the relatively better current cancer survival rate. However, the size of breast cancers has changed, most dramatically on the basis of mammography. When I started practice, in San Francisco in 1972, the average size of an invasive breast cancer was 30 mm (1.2 inches). By 1994 the average size of an invasive breast cancer was 14 mm, and of one detected mammographically 11 mm (about two fifths of an inch).

In 1972, 40 percent of women with invasive breast cancer suffered a recurrence or died of their disease within five years, whereas of the patients with mammographically detected 11 mm invasive breast cancers, only 10 percent will have suffered a recurrence within five years. Most of those who die of breast cancer remain older women, who are reluctant to have breast examination or mammography, and who present with much larger cancers at higher stages. In my present practice, with a population with an average age of sixty-nine, the average size of invasive breast cancer is 28 mm—not significantly different from what it was a quarter century ago in the same city.

Dr. Plotkin's comments suggest that pathologic grading of invasive carcinomas is imprecise and subject to a great deal of inter-observer variability. This is not the case. A standardized system of grading of invasive breast carcinomas has been available since 1970. This system is simple to use and highly reproducible. The grade established by this system more accurately reflects disease-free survival than does the receptor status (the measure of estrogen- and progesterone-receptor protein in the carcinoma). One of the senior investigators in a clinical trial in which Plotkin participated (B. Fisher) noted little difference between estrogen-receptor-positive and -negative status and outcome (Fisher et al., 1986). Not a few high-grade (aggressive, poorly differentiated) invasive car-

cinomas are estrogen-receptor-positive and still grow quite rapidly.

Plotkin expends considerable effort trying to impugn the now widely accepted benefits of screening mammography. Virtually every study has shown a significant reduction in breast-cancer mortality among the women screened, and the most recent data indicate a similar benefit for younger women (forty to forty-nine). These recent data will require the National Cancer Institute to revise, yet again, its recommendations regarding the interval between mammographic examinations. "Lead-time bias" implies that a woman whose breast cancer is detected mammographically years prior to its possible clinical detection would have the same eventual mortality. In fact, as numerous trials of screening mammography and also my own personal experience testify, this is not the case. A cancer detected at 11 mm is associated with a very different outcome at ten years than a cancer of the same specific type 30 mm in size. Although recurrences will continue after ten years for the 11 mm cancers, they are less frequent than among 30 mm cancers. Clinical trials to test the efficacy of mammography have as their end point a reduction in breast-cancer mortality. To call the Kopparberg trial bootless because the lives saved from breast-cancer mortality were offset by cardiac disease is absurd.

**Michael D. Lagios, M.D.**  
*Medical Director*  
*Breast Cancer Consultation Service*  
*San Francisco, Calif.*

I and other members of the Women's Health and the Environment Network (WHEN) were glad to see your June cover article on breast cancer. However, when David Plotkin discussed "the change in women's hormonal environment," he talked about it strictly in terms of lifestyle changes, such as delayed and fewer pregnancies, and women in the work force.

Dr. Plotkin left out what many of us believe to be the biggest change in our hormonal environment—the huge increase in hormonally active synthetic chemicals in our environment. These chemicals mimic estrogen or alter the way the body processes its own estrogen. These environmental estrogens are adding to the total estrogen load we carry and pass on to our children. Many now suspect that these chemicals are among the causes of in-



creased rates of breast cancer (and of reduced sperm counts and other problems).

**Catherine Miller**  
*Milwaukee, Wis.*

**I** am extremely disappointed by *The Atlantic's* publication of an inflammatory and misleading article on breast cancer. David Plotkin has taken some very complex and contentious issues and put the most negative spin on them possible. Let me take just one example among many—his paragraph on radiation therapy. Modern-day techniques do not result in tissues that feel “thick, hard, even wooden—a strange, unpleasant sensation.” Plotkin also states that radiation may promote lung cancer in the irradiated side of the body. What is missing is any recognition of the very positive data available on current radiation techniques and of long-term follow-up studies that show no increased risk of cancer in women treated with breast irradiation. A very frightening message has needlessly been sent to any women contemplating breast conservation (and therefore radiation therapy). In many other ways Dr.

Plotkin casts current management strategies, whether of screening or of treatment, in a light suggesting that they are either worthless or harmful. At a time when patients' trust in the medical field is challenged from so many directions, this message is particularly harmful.

**Lynn C. Hartmann, M.D.**  
*Director, Mayo Women's Cancer Program  
Rochester, Minn.*

*David Plotkin replies:*

The huge increase in life expectancy since the Industrial Revolution is attributable largely to agro-industrial and public-health advances. Getting rid of puerpual sepsis flipped the men-to-women ratio of 100 to 95 seen early in this century. A tremendous reduction in infant deaths was the single largest factor in increasing the length of the average life.

The average doubling time of mammographically discovered breast cancer is greater than 260 days—about three times as long as the average doubling time of metastatic breast cancer. This fact alone can account for the improvement in the five-year survival rate, with

the number of deaths per 100,000, age-adjusted, staying remarkably stable.

The widely accepted benefits of screening mammography are based on only two randomized trials, both conducted twenty-five to thirty years ago and both very possibly flawed. The inability of a more modern randomized trial to confirm even the purported small decrease in mortality reported by these old trials justifies skepticism.

When Michael Lagios says that a group of women with tumors 11 mm in diameter has a better five- or even ten-year survival rate than a group with 30 mm tumors, he is supporting the influence of lead-time bias. If the proliferative rate in the 11 mm group is slower than that in the 30 mm group, the longer-term mortality will also be better. Omitting measurements of proliferative rate from the analysis of primary breast tumors introduces the likelihood of test and control groups that are not equivalent. In the old randomized trials we did not have such readily available technology. Today we are able to conduct trials in which apples are truly compared with apples.

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If, as Catherine Miller asserts, a "huge increase in hormonally active synthetic chemicals in our environment" has occurred, I don't see the evidence. The use of postmenopausal estrogen-replacement therapy is the one clear change in the lives of women, aside from the much expanded period of fecundity.

I believe that the excessively prolonged action of "normal" estrogen on breast tissue is far more strongly implicated in the rising incidence of breast cancer than synthetic estrogenic toxins, whose presence is relatively minor. Women menstruate until their ovaries stop making estrogen. Only if estrogen-replacement therapy is prescribed do they resume menstruating. If the toxins are playing a role, it must be very small.

Lynn Hartmann, like other radiologists and radiation therapists of years past, wants to play down the toxicity of radiation. The advocates of radical surgery, now largely in the past, and the current promoters of aggressive cancer chemotherapy tend not to want to acknowledge the deleterious effects of the treatment provided by their specialty. In the past,

relatively few long-term survivors of cancer received radiation therapy as a primary treatment. Those patients had radiated tissues that, when I encountered them, felt quite abnormal to me. Obviously, the majority of patients treated with radiation therapy fifty to twenty-five years ago died of the cancer or some other illness before the long-term effects of radiation could be assessed. With the more widespread use of radiation therapy in large numbers of patients with acute leukemia, Hodgkins disease, testicular cancer, and slow-growing breast cancers, we will see more long-term complications of radiation therapy. Some acknowledgment of this should be given to patients who are making treatment decisions.

### Germania Irredenta

**H**ans Koning's article "Germania Irredenta" (July *Atlantic*) deserves an answer from someone who, even fifty-one years after the capitulation of the German Wehrmacht, considers himself a Reichsdeutscher, a Reich German.

Koning's last three paragraphs show the illusions under which those whom I call the "anti-Germans" suffer: they try to obfuscate a matter of realpolitik with an emotional issue that will have absolutely no impact on the future development of the issue—namely, the return to Germany of ancient German territory.

There is no reason why a German of East Prussian ancestry who was born in the West should feel animosity toward Russians living in his parents' home in Königsberg right now. Certainly these Russians bear no responsibility for the fact that the Königsberg Germans were driven out or murdered in 1945. The same goes for the Poles now living in Breslau, and the Czechs in Eger.

Königsberg was founded by the Germans in 1255 A.D.; the beautiful city hall of Breslau was built by its *German* population in the fourteenth century; and Eger has been an integral part of the Reich (up to 1919) since about the year 1000 A.D. I mention these facts only to show that the German Eastern territories were not just recent acquisitions, as are Hawaii by the United States and Chechnya by Russia.

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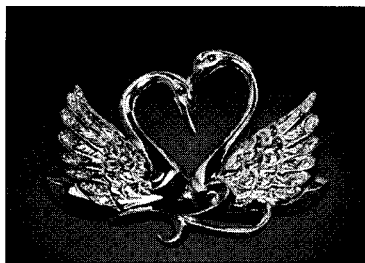
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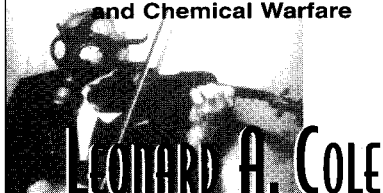
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**W.H. FREEMAN**

Will the Sudetenland, Silesia, Pomerania, and East Prussia become German again? I would say yes. Koning believes that the Germans ought to consider 1945 a clean slate, and forget everything that went before. Such a view is unrealistic and even ahistorical. The real obstacle to the return to rightful borders in East-Central Europe is first and foremost the United States, and then the governments of England, France, and Bonn.

Koning put much emphasis on the facts that in 1945 many millions of East Germans were removed from their ancestral homes (one of the greatest war crimes in history) and that in the meantime perhaps as many millions of Poles, Czechs, and Russians have taken the place of the former German inhabitants. Does this fact reduce German claims? Is it a hindrance to the eventual reincorporation of these territories into a reconstituted Reich (or whatever name is eventually chosen)? In both instances I think not: except for the time from 1919 to 1945, the Reich was always a multi-ethnic European entity. Perhaps that will eventually be its role again.

**Hans Schmidt**  
*Pensacola, Fla.*

**H**ans Koning's "Germania Irredenta" is the kind of anti-German trash published during the world wars. The Second World War "really started with those Sudeten Germans," according to him, but this is historically inaccurate, because the problem began with the Treaty of Versailles, which denied the Sudeten Germans their basic rights of self-determination, as promised in Wilson's Fourteen Points, and thereby led to their just and rightful desire to unite with Germany.

After the Second World War the Sudeten Germans were victimized for a second time by the criminal forced expulsion from their homelands. Crimes against humanity are clearly defined by international law, and the Sudeten Germans clearly were victims of such crimes. Crimes cannot be relativized.

Koning states that "the best that reunited Germany can ask for . . . is a clean slate." Yes, this is true, but the clean slate should require that all the other states of Europe own up to the crimes they committed against Germans after the war.

**Don Heinrich Tolzmann**  
*Cincinnati, Ohio*

*Hans Koning replies:*

I have received letters from readers who express doubt that any Germans are still taking the border claims of the former deportees seriously. Thus I am grateful in a way for letters such as those by Hans Schmidt and Don Heinrich Tolzmann, among others, which prove that such arguments do persist.

The Slavic-Teutonic border in Europe has moved east and west over a span of a thousand years, a gauge of the relative power of its neighboring peoples. The challenge of the German destruction-invasion of 1941 (not ordinary defeat of the Slavs but their destruction was the German plan) was so absolute that in its response the Soviet Army, which was then a second-class force, became the most powerful army of its time. That this border should now be moved east again, even if Germans did build the fourteenth-century city hall of what was then Breslau, makes no sense historically. As for the moral issues at stake . . . but I'd better stop here.

## Advice & Consent

**I** feel I must correct the impression given in "The Paradoxical Case of Tony Blair," by Geoffrey Wheatcroft (*June Atlantic*), that the BBC was swayed by political pressure from the Labour Party into giving Tony Blair's keynote speech more prominence than the O. J. Simpson trial verdict.

The suggestion that the BBC did as it was told is ludicrous. The editor of the news did not even know that Blair's office had contacted the BBC at the time the decision to lead with Blair was made.

Political parties regularly attempt to put pressure on BBC news programs, but our judgments are made independent of any outside influence or interference.

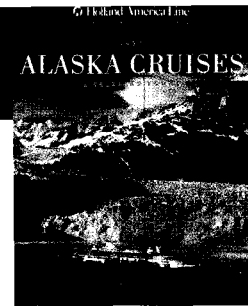
**Richard Sambrook**  
*British Broadcasting Corporation  
London, England*

**EDITORS' NOTE:** The credit line for Conor Cruise O'Brien's cover story in last month's issue should have noted that the book from which it was drawn, *The Long Affair: Thomas Jefferson and the French Revolution 1785-1800*, will be published next month in the United Kingdom and in Europe by Sinclair-Stevenson.



# when was the last time

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# THE NOVEMBER ALMANAC



## Environment

This month NASA launches its Mars Global Surveyor, the first spacecraft to visit Mars in 20 years, which will commence what is to be a decade-long series of small, relatively inexpensive missions intended to boost our understanding of Mars. The MGS will arrive in Mars's orbit next September; over two years it will survey the planet's topography, magnetism, mineral composition, and atmosphere. In the process the MGS will relay to Earth more information than has been gathered by all previous missions to Mars combined, even though its cost—roughly \$220 million—is a small fraction of the cost of those missions. For those interested in Martian meteorology, a daily Martian weather report, sent back from the MGS, will be available on the Internet.

## Arts & Letters

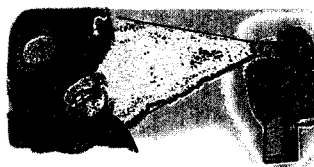
November is American Indian Heritage Month. Among the events coinciding with this year's observance is the November 5 opening of an exhibit of Native American ledger drawings—pieces composed by tribal artists primarily in the bound volumes used for inventory by traders and military officers—at The Drawing Center, in New York City. "Plains Indian Drawings, 1865–1935" will display more than 150 works. Although ledger drawings have long been studied by historians and ethnographers, rarely before have



they been exhibited mainly for their artistic merit (most art historians began regarding them with interest only within the past 30 years). The pieces in the exhibit stem from Arapaho, Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Lakota artists. Many depict those tribes' adjustment to reservation life (and, in some cases, to jail); others portray their earlier, migratory culture. The exhibit will travel to Wisconsin, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania next year.

## The Skies

November 5 and 6, the waning Moon passes south of Mars at dawn. 8, by now a slender crescent, the Moon lies near Venus in the early-morning hours. 16–17, the Leonid meteor shower reaches its annual height in the hours after midnight. Notoriously unpredictable from year to year, the Leonids are working toward a probable peak display in 1998 or 1999, soon after their parent comet, Tempel-Tuttle, passes through perihelion; consequently, tonight's shower could be worth staying up for. 24, Full Moon, also known this month as the Frosty, Beaver, or Snow Moon.



## Government

November 1, as of today New Yorkers over the age of 18 may, like adult residents of every other state, legally use Mace and other chemical sprays for self-defense; the use or possession of self-defense sprays has been a misdemeanor in New York since 1969. 5, Election Day. This is the first presidential election since the National Voter Registration Act took effect, in January of last year. The act requires certain government offices, including driver's-license

bureaus and welfare offices, to offer voter registration to those who come in for their services; it also mandates that states offer registration by mail. Human SERVE, a national voter-registration organization, estimates that as many as 10 million voters have been added to the rolls as a result of the law. The new registrants are thought to be younger than the average voter (some are new drivers), and many are registering as independents. Whether voter turnout, which typically hovers around 50 percent in presidential races, will be bolstered remains, of course, to be seen.



## Food

November 4, starting today poultry products made from tissue that has been mechanically removed from scraps and already stripped carcasses—the materials are fed through a sieve, to separate and discard most of the bone—must be labeled as containing "mechanically separated chicken" or "mechanically separated turkey." The purpose of this requirement, mandated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service, is to inform consumers that products processed in this way, including poultry nuggets, patties, frankfurters, and luncheon meats, do not consist simply of ground meat; they may also contain skin, bone, bone marrow, and the kidneys and sex glands of immature birds. The FSIS regulation was prompted in large part by a lawsuit brought against the USDA by manufacturers of red-meat sausages, who, along with other meat producers, have since 1978 been obliged to label mechanically separated beef, lamb, and pork as such.



## Expiring Patent

No. 3,993,323. Drag Chute for Bicycle. "A bicycle attachment comprising a parachute, in combination with container means for holding said chute in a collapsed position . . . to . . . a part of the bicycle such as a rear fender, . . . tether means for attaching said chute to said container, positive ejection means for ejecting the chute from the container, . . . [and] control means, whereby the parachute is released."

## 25 Years Ago

L. E. Sissman, writing in the November, 1971, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "I hereby confess to a sneaking liking for the eleventh month, as Walt Whitman would call it, though its name means 'ninth.' November is, in the best sense, a natural month. For nature, it is a time of necessary death and burial. For men, it is a time for return to roots, if roots are roots, from the temporary playground of summer's outdoors. It is a month without the pressures of anticipation of, say, March, when spring becomes unbearably promising because withheld. It is a month without the recirculated tedium of holidays—except Thanksgiving, a sad and modest feast—to be got through. Best of all, it is a month worse than its precursors, better than its successors, a month that breeds resignation, evaluation, and acceptance."





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# Broken Covenant?

*The time to revise the Ten Commandments,  
some say, draws nigh*

**A**T a hearing conducted earlier this year under the auspices of the Episcopal Church in the matter of Bishop Walter Righter—Righter, it will be recalled, was charged with heresy for ordaining a noncelibate gay man into holy orders—the subject of the Ten Commandments came up more or less in passing. In response to a question from the prelates sitting in judgment, the lawyer arguing on Bishop Righter's behalf (successfully, as it turned out) made the point that “not everything we're going to find in Holy Scripture” constitutes an intrinsic element of formal Episcopal doctrine. Among the things that do not constitute doctrine, in the lawyer's view, are the Ten Commandments.

The idea that the Ten Commandments might be regarded as something about which the devout can reasonably disagree represents one more front in a battle that has been waged across sectarian lines for millennia. As everyone is aware, an enduring characteristic of institutional religion has been the tension between the stern forces of authority, rigor, and theological punctilio on the one hand, and the entropic tendency toward decentralization, squishy standards, and theological laissez-faire on the other. Whether this tension is greater today than it was in the past I cannot say, but the two camps—the hard-liners and the accommodationists, as one might label them—have during the past few years provided some memorable illustrations of their points of view.

The hard-line impulse makes itself apparent in ways great and small. A 1993 study prepared by an office of the Southern Baptist Convention indicated that a formula had been devised to predict what percentage of a given population was bound for hell; newspaper reports offered county-by-county estimates for Alabama along with a ranking of the top hot spots by county nationwide (Los Angeles County led the list with 6.9 million lost souls). In Israel the practice of posthumous circumcision arose a few years ago; the procedure had never been performed on many of the hundreds of thousands of Russian Jewish men who emigrated to the country. The Mor-



mons continue to be assiduous in baptizing into their faith famous people who have died: George Washington, Joseph Stalin, and Elvis Presley are now officially Mormons in good standing. In England a chancellor of the Church of England has upheld a Lancashire vicar's decision to prohibit the use of nicknames on tombstones in Church-consecrated burying

grounds. Such are the lengths to which the hard-liners will go.

Evidence of a countertrend comes from those who would take the easy route or would seek the succor of Mammon. In New England it has been discovered that some Protestant pastors have been delivering plagiarized sermons—or, more precisely, sermons obtained from a homily mill called Pulpit Resources. (The author of the sermons observed in defense of this practice, “One definition of heresy is originality.”) Jews visiting Jerusalem have long been leaving written prayers in the crevices of the Western Wall; now they can send prayers by fax to Jerusalem and someone else will put them in the crevices. The Vatican Library has decided to license its imprimatur for commercial purposes (museum knickknacks, T-shirts, greeting cards), and it has also revised some of the ascetic procedures for electing a Pope,

forsaking the spartan cot-and-chamber-pot facilities traditionally provided for cardinals in the Apostolic Palace in favor of hotel-like rooms with private baths. Church discipline is also at somewhat of a remove from the time when the Emperor Henry IV was made to stand in the snow for three days outside the Pope's castle at Canossa, awaiting forgiveness. A French bishop, Jacques Gaillot, because of his ultra-liberal views was recently transferred from his position at Evreux, in Normandy, and given charge instead of the defunct diocese of Partenia, in southern Algeria, which has been covered by sand since the Middle Ages. Gaillot has retaliated by creating a virtual diocese on the Internet, which can be reached at <http://www.partenia.fr/>.

In a world where such things are possible, it is perhaps not surprising that some people gave credence to the report posted on the Internet two years ago that the Microsoft Corporation was acquiring the Roman Catholic Church. Under the terms of the

**by Cullen Murphy**



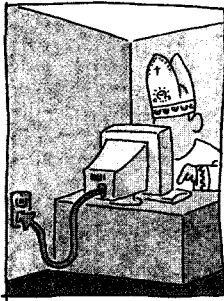
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agreement, according to what was said to be an Associated Press account, Pope John Paul II was to become a senior vice-president of Microsoft's religious-software division, and two Microsoft vice-presidents would be consecrated as cardinals. "If the deal goes through," the report said, "it will be the first time a computer software company has acquired a major world religion."



It is against this contentious and free-wheeling background that I confess to some degree of worry about the Ten Commandments—a worry prompted by more than just the comments of Bishop Righter's lawyer. As individual strictures, the Ten Commandments have, of course, always been beleaguered, and as often as not honored in the breach. "Ship me some-

wheres east of Suez, where the best is like the worst," Rudyard Kipling wrote, "Where there aren't no Ten Commandments, an' a man can raise a thirst." No doubt even those who manage most of the time to obey the commandments have inserted private "except for . . ." clauses after at least one or two of them. But amid the wrongdoing all around, the Ten Commandments have stood intact as a cultural and moral totem for nearly 3,000 years.

Will they survive as such for another thousand? Some would use coercion to make sure that they do: the Tennessee senate recently passed a resolution that prods local schools, homes, and businesses to post copies of the Ten Commandments in prominent places. Needless to say, such a measure (sure to be struck down) is in itself a sign of the commandments' erosion. Two years ago a survey of 1,200 people aged fifteen to thirty-five found that most of those polled could name no more than two of the Ten Commandments, and they weren't too happy about some of the others when they were told about them. They also had clear ideas about how the commandments might be revised for modern times. Support was weak for keeping the sabbath holy and honoring one's father and mother, but "Thou shalt not drink and drive" and "Thou shalt care for the environment" would have appeared on any new list of commandments put together by this group. ("Thou shalt not commit adultery" somehow managed to survive, in the No. 10 position.) When the respondents were given a list of nonreligious figures, including Madonna and the rock group U2, and asked who might be entrusted with the task of drawing up a new list of commandments, the person receiving the most support was Oprah Winfrey.

Suggestions for replacing the Ten Commandments altogether are, in fact, becoming common. In Britain last winter the chief executive of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Nicholas Tate, called for the development of a modern, secular Ten Commandments, because so few people were familiar with the old set anymore, and he indicated that some of the ground covered by the new set might include "Punctuality," "Patience," and "A sense of fair play." The actual drafting of the new Ten Commandments was to be left in the hands of a team of businessmen, church and community leaders, and aca-

demics. (While they're at it, they will probably change the Day of Judgment to the Day of Assessment.)

Earlier this year a Silicon Valley industrialist named Orion Moshe Kopelman published a book called *The Second Ten Commandments*, which sets out a body of rules for the coming century. Kopelman argues that "the struggles we now face require a new universal code to help future generations survive in a global and planetary society, freed from individual or uni-cultural survival concerns." The first of the new commandments, supplementing "I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have no other Gods before me," is "Maximize your time spent in flow and happiness." The third new commandment, supplementing "Thou shalt not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God," is "Develop greater self-acceptance by loving yourself unconditionally." The eighth new commandment, supplementing "Thou shalt not steal," is "Base your level of relationship commitments on bottom lines—what you can't live with and can't live without." (Those two "can't"s are the only uses of any negative in Kopelman's code.)

Even organizations one would expect to take a relatively conservative stance have displayed a certain defensiveness on the subject of the Ten Commandments. In announcing his "Contract With the American Family," a ten-point legislative agenda for Congress, Ralph Reed, the executive director of the Christian Coalition, emphasized to reporters that his proposals should not be thought of as the Ten Commandments. No, no. Think of them as "the Ten Suggestions"—a remark that prompts a slightly edited rendering of various passages in Exodus 20: "Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy, unless something comes up." "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor—at least not on a regular basis." "Honor thy father and thy mother, usually."

Once the issue is raised, of course, it is hard not to wonder what the Ten Commandments really would be like if they were being promulgated today for the first time. I queried Charlton Heston, who played the role of Moses in the movie *The Ten Commandments*, about what he would add to the commandments if he were given the chance to add one more. His response was "Do your best; keep your promises." Friends whom I've asked to contemplate a modern overhaul of the Ten Commandments have been less high-minded. A couple of cynics suggested that "Thou shalt not get caught" and "Thou shalt not get involved" would nicely complement the temper of the age. More than one person's immediate comment was "Do there have to be ten?" I heard some loose talk, derived from Republican regulatory philosophy, about "voluntary compliance." Someone wondered whether we might get to work on revising the Seven Deadly Sins as well.

In the Bible this kind of commentary always presages a date with fire and brimstone. Only time will tell whether "Thou shalt care for the environment" is enough to ward it off. ☯







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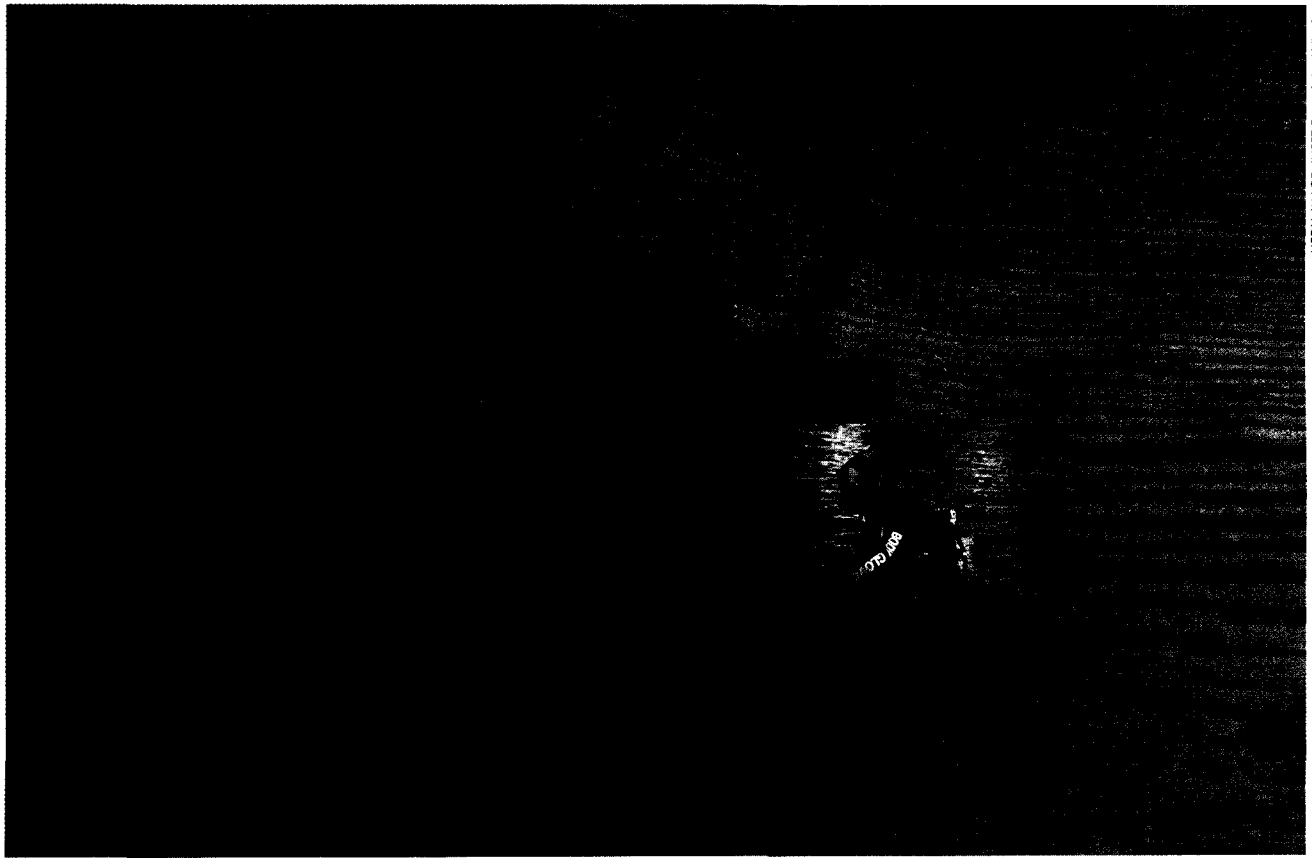
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## Log Me a River

*As old-growth longleaf pine becomes scarce, thousands of valuable logs are being raised from riverbeds where they have lain for close to a century*

**T**HE asphalt road that leads north to the boat launch could be a black hose laid down across a gargantuan lawn. Off the shoulder on either side a narrow "beauty strip" of mature longleaf pines casts an arc of shade over the state highway. Their

**by Heather Millar**

tall, straight trunks reach up to green crowns of zigzag branches, each ending in tufts of twelve-inch needles that look vaguely like Christmas ornaments. Beyond, clearly visible through the longleaf, stretch miles upon miles of younger trees,

mostly loblolly and slash pine, with upturned, regular branches and shorter needles. These youngsters stand in rows that would do a corn farmer proud. Probably planted on the same day, twenty to thirty years ago, all have grown to roughly the same height, as even as blades of newly cut grass. Though the beauty strip never abandons the line of road, the managed forest beyond disappears every few miles. There the rows of trees have been "harvested," leaving only a blank square of brambles and red

dirt. Industrial forestry dominates this part of southeastern Georgia. Huge timber and paper companies—Union Camp, Georgia Pacific, Gilman Paper—own vast sections of the coastal plain. For many towns in these woods, prosperity can be predicted by the distance to the nearest paper mill. One after another, tractor-trailers rumble along the back roads. Their loads of skinny trees jostle in the trailer cradles like so many handfuls of chopsticks.

Though this scene might disturb those with an affection for wilderness, the timber companies argue that we all use paper and that, as every child knows, trees grow back. If you cut down a tree and process it into a magazine like this one, you can always plant another. In twenty or thirty years it, too, will be jostling along some Georgia back road on the way to becoming paper pulp.

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*Above, heart of longleaf pine, recovered from a river bottom*

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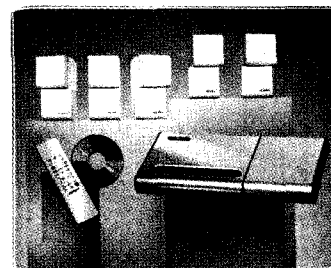
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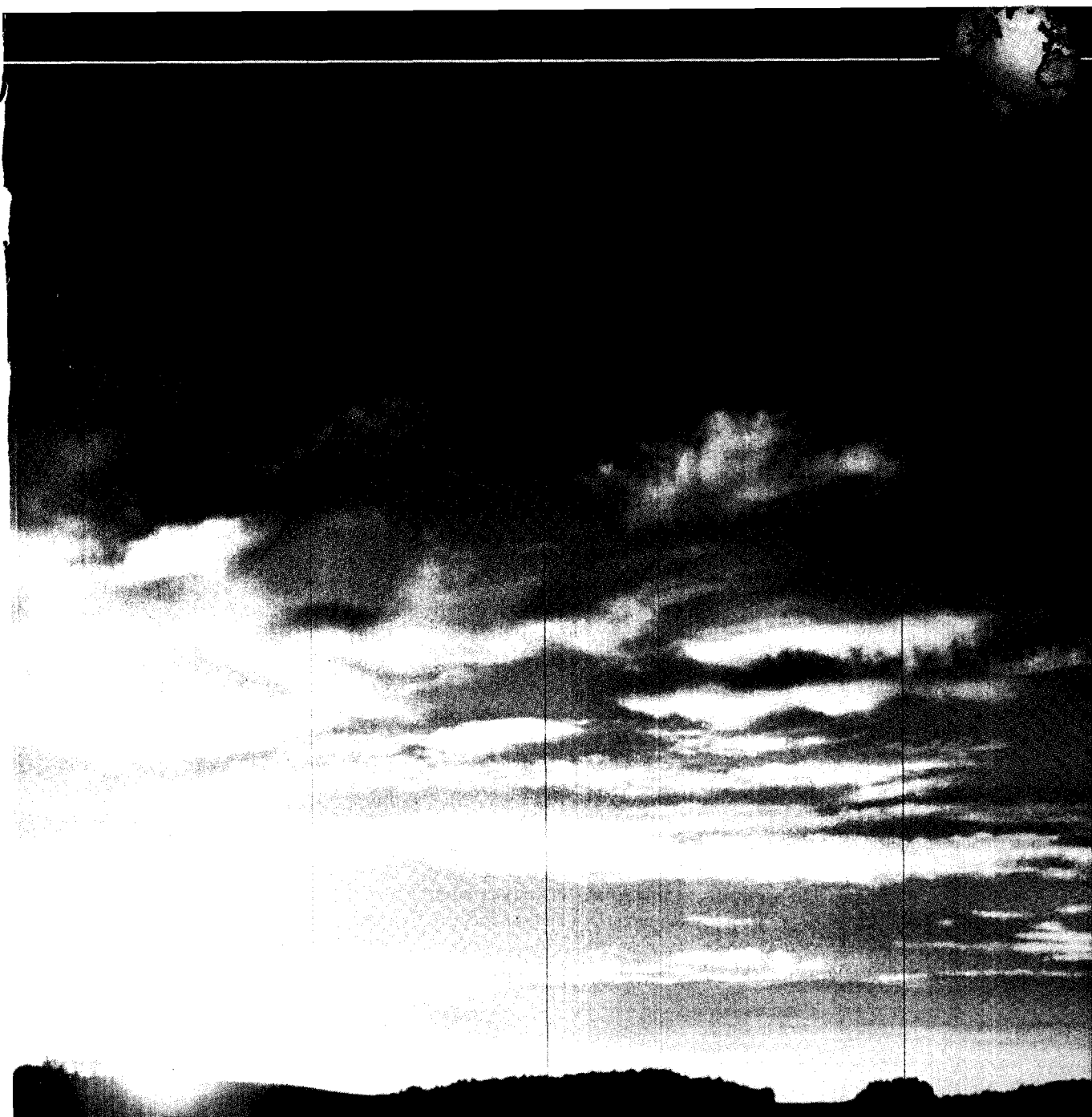
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time the chief of the U.S. Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot, talked of “sustained yield management” that would administer the wilderness for the betterment of man. This formed the battle cry of that era’s Wise Use movement, which proposed the then-radical idea that resources should be extracted from the earth without raping it. Since the 1992 Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro, the buzzword has been “sustainability.” Simply put, this means supporting human society without taking more in resources, or creating more in pollution, than the earth can handle, or “sustain.” Like Pinchot before them, the supporters of sustainability emphasize that efficient use is good business. The Netherlands, New Zealand, and Canada have all launched national “green plans” aimed at making their economies environmentally sustainable. President Bill Clinton has formed a Council on Sustainable Development. Cities from Curitiba, Brazil, to Chattanooga, Tennessee, are trying out sustainability-related regulations and processes. Mail-order catalogues of sustainable products are available, along with enough literature on the subject to break a strong man’s back.

A philosophy by which we take out only as much as we give back is hard to argue with. Parts of the discussion, however, sound as if they had been borrowed from a pitch for a perpetual-motion machine. Experts talk of products that are created without waste, and of “cradle-to-cradle” recovery, in which absolutely everything gets recycled. Indeed, what they are talking about is managing the

planet, controlling the use and production of its natural resources, not just in agriculture but also in mining and manufacturing, in fishing and lumbering.

Yet managed nature is a pale copy. Hothouse tomatoes don’t have the sweet, full flavor of vine-ripened fruit. Farm-raised salmon don’t have the meaty texture and refined taste of wild salmon. Mahogany laminate lacks the rich hue and presence of the solid wood. A glimpse of managed nature’s true face comes into view in Georgia as the asphalt road gives way to a muddy track down to the river.

**N**O log trucks use this dirt path, but it leads to what was once the timber superhighway. Before tractor-trailers and railroads, lumberjacks floated timber down rivers. Along the Escatawpa, in Mississippi; the Little Pee Dee, in South Carolina; the Altamaha, in Georgia; and many others, bands of logging land extended three to five miles inland from most riverbanks. From the time of settlement until about 1910 the rivers provided cheap transportation to the mills. Oxen dragged the logs to the water, where iron “raft rings” were driven into them at each end. Chains were threaded through these rings to assemble the logs into rafts. The system worked well enough; although the trip to the mill was often long, perhaps 95 percent of the logs made it through. Some might get snagged in the shallows and buried in mud. Some might become waterlogged and be cut loose to save the rest of the raft. Others might get caught in a bend,

or be too full of heavy resin to float for long.

The lumbermen didn’t worry about these “sinkers,” or “deadheads.” The supply of longleaf pine—also called Georgia, yellow, longstraw, or heart pine—seemed limitless. In a swath 200 miles wide, forests of longleaf followed the coast from southern Virginia to eastern Texas. It was once the commonest of woods, covering 75 million to 85 million acres. Longleaf floored the rooms of Thomas Jefferson’s estate at Monticello, built the keel of the USS *Constitution* (“Old Ironsides”) and the caissons of the Brooklyn Bridge, framed four out of five houses in the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida. The lumber barons could not foresee that one day this vast forest would be fragmented into a few dozen scattered stands, only two or three of them holding old-growth timber. No one knew how slowly longleaf grew, how difficult it was to manage; when these lumbermen learned, more easily managed forests of slash and loblolly pine were planted to feed the paper and particle-board and lumber mills.

The character of the wood changed. Longleaf lumber from old-growth trees, those older than 150 years, has unique qualities. Centuries of slow growth give the longleaf a tighter grain than other pines and, pound for pound, a strength comparable to that of steel. Fast-grown young trees, like loblolly, lack the sturdiness needed for good structural timber; as a result, some varieties of the southern-yellow-pine family have earned a bad name in the construction industry. Craftsmen prize the pale-rose-to-burgundy color of longleaf heartwood, the hard, resin-saturated center of the log. Only trees allowed to mature beyond 150 years have this in any quantity. And of course old-growth timber is bigger; old houses often had boards twenty feet long. Trees that big are virtually nonexistent today.

Indeed, good, solid wood, once as common as dirt, has become something of a luxury. As a result, contractors in Pennsylvania are dismantling and remilling old pine, chestnut, and hemlock barns. A company in Minnesota reclaims virgin-fir boards from old bridges and factories. In California and Oregon old redwood is being salvaged from defunct lumber mills, refinished, and used again. Almost a dozen companies in the South recycle



Florida, 1907: a log raft winds toward the mill on the Oklawaha River



*Lumbermen didn't worry about "sinkers," or "deadheads." The supply of longleaf pine seemed limitless.*

heart pine from vintage buildings. But though this wood is old-growth, nail holes and cracks mean it's not exactly "virgin" any longer. The only place to find wood like that is where it was left behind—under water.

**R**IVERS make a latticework through the industrial forests of southern Georgia. Lazily they flow to the Atlantic Ocean, where they empty into the protected waters created by barrier islands. Once, these waterways were busy with logging, but now no one and nothing watches the scuba divers Rick Bennett and Jack Ring. Bennett goes first, jumping over the side of his square-bowed johnboat into the lukewarm water. The early-summer air is thick with humidity, disturbed only by the whirring of crickets and the burble of the diver's air bubbles popping against the flat aluminum hulls of the boats. Then Bennett's head breaks the surface with a splash. He pulls the air regulator from his mouth and pushes his diving mask onto his forehead.

"I've found a whole pile!" he yells. "Looks to be eight or ten!"

From his own boat Ring calls back, "All right, cuz. Time to go to work in the big creepy." Ring pulls on his scuba vest and flippers and falls backward over the side of his boat. The water is the color of tea: tannin, leaching from submerged cypress roots, has turned it rust-brown. Forty feet beneath the surface, where the logs are protected in their oxygen-free sanctuary, the color deepens to inky black. Even with powerful hand-held lights the divers can see little more than a foot ahead down there. Less than a week before, a venomous water moccasin struck at the light when it was surprised by Ring. "Damn thing struck three times." Most of the work must be done by feel, and this has its own risks.

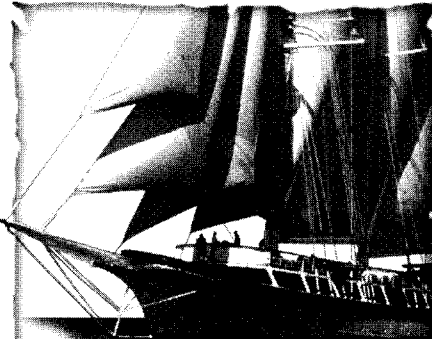
Bennett was once running his hand along a log when, suddenly, the log moved. It was actually the tail of an eight-foot alligator.

"A lot of people don't like black water," Bennett says, as he reaches into his boat and feels for ropes and buoys to mark the logs. "And it's not a good place to let your imagination run away with you. Don't see *Alien 2* before diving in these rivers." Rope in hand, he descends. Three feet under, he fades from sight, leaving a halo of bubbles behind.

The search for lost longleaf logs begins in small-town libraries and historical societies. At some time in the past century most settlements on southern coastal rivers had a sawmill, even two or three. Bennett and other divers sift through local records and unpublished histories. They have pored over tales of the Suwannee, Satilla, and Flint Rivers, in Georgia; the Apalachicola River, in Florida; and half a dozen more in other states. Where did lumberjacks establish landings in preparation for floating logs down to the mill? Where were the sawmills? Do local stories mention any disastrous logjams that might have caused a lot of logs to sink? Does the river make any sharp bends that might have been hard to navigate and so might have claimed a few logs? The answers to these questions hint at where logs might be hiding.

Using such general clues, the divers pick a likely stretch of river and divide it into sections. Then they "read" the riverbed by touch. Crossing back and forth, they feel their way along the underwater terrain. Most days they will come across a log or two. If they're fortunate, they'll stumble on a pile.

Bennett pops to the surface again. "I found another small pile!" he exclaims, gesturing fifty yards upstream to where a lobster buoy marks his find. One log pile is a windfall; two is almost unbelievable luck. "I knew this was a good spot, could just tell," Bennett says exultantly, throwing his diving fins aboard the boat and following them in. Though he grew up in the South, he betrays no trace of an accent. Perhaps he lost it while studying tropical-plant botany at the University of Florida, or while running a chocolate plantation in Costa Rica. After a plant-importing business failed, he went to work in a lumber mill and then learned



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*Coaxing the logs to the surface can be difficult and dangerous. This close to the coast the river is tidal.*

about log diving. Tall, blond, and tanned, he has a soft spot for trendy Oakley sunglasses. At forty-three he could still pass for a surfer, the type that seems never to have had a desk job or a lingering doubt. He appears to thrive on daredevil moments.

Ring soon resurfaces as well. "Well, cuz, whatcha know?" he calls with a twang. Ring took up diving to look for "old-timey artifacts," using a flashlight in a Ziploc bag to search out bottles, coins, anchors. The two met several years later, when Bennett came across two stolen cars ditched in a river not far from Ring's house. Bennett's work intrigued Ring, who has always lived in southern Georgia and, except for a stint in the Navy, had always worked at a paper mill in St. Mary's. He took a leave to tag along with Bennett; now he regularly takes a vacation or a leave of absence to dive for logs several weeks a year.

The logs they have found fell to the bottom in a jumble like so many pick-up sticks. Once a group is located, Bennett and Ring must get the feel of the pile. They pull themselves along the entire length of each log in order to determine how the pile is structured, which logs are pinning which, and what to pull first.

Coaxing the logs to the surface can be difficult and dangerous. This close to the coast the river is tidal; the divers may have to fight currents exceeding seven knots, or about ten miles an hour. At the same time, they must dig away sand or mud that has built up around the timbers. Each of their air tanks holds eighty cubic feet of oxygen at 3,000 pounds of pressure; on a Caribbean pleasure dive one could last from sixty to ninety minutes at this depth. When Bennett and Ring are working hard, a typical tank lasts only forty-five minutes, sometimes less.

At midafternoon Ring comes up breathless and annoyed from wrestling with the tide. "I'm not doing it any more today," he gasps. "I couldn't get a hold down there. I had to jab my knife into the sand just to stay in place." Bennett pops to the surface. "Boy, the water's really humping," he says. "My second wind just went." It's time to tie a rope from the first log to the boat, start the engine, and pull.

Sometimes during a pull the rope breaks, and a log gets lost. A greater danger is that one end of the log will snag on the way up, causing the timber to rear up vertically and then come crashing down on the boat. For the most part, however, getting a log up off the bottom is surprisingly similar to getting a water skier in motion.

Bennett opens the throttle wide. His Suzuki outboard motor strains, going nowhere. The average log weighs about half a ton—several times as much as the little dive boat. Then the boat lurches, seemingly set free. "We've got it!" Bennett exclaims. Moments later the butt of the log breaks the surface, creating a fan of water.

The five miles to the nearest landing pass slowly. The land on either side of the river is flat and open. Once the core habitat for longleaf, it has been logged over once, perhaps twice, and yet still feels primordial. Now it is dominated by second-growth cypresses festooned with Spanish moss, though a few longleafs and spiky accents of palmetto are visible too. Purple hyacinth, imported in the past century, blooms in the shallows at water's edge.

The boat passes what's left of some old slave quarters. Only the foundations remain—cast of a kind of proto-concrete made from sand, oyster shells, and lime. When the slaves weren't working in fields of cotton, indigo, and tobacco, their plantation masters sent them to the longleaf-pine forests to collect "naval stores." Navies and merchant fleets needed the gummy resin found in the trees' inner bark and sapwood. The distilled resin formed the base of turpentine, tar, rosin, and pitch, used to seal hulls, caulk decks, coat riggings, thin paints, coat cuts, even make soap. Tar and pitch were among the colonists' earliest exports. Longleaf pine put the tar in North Carolina's "tarheels."

One of the worst slave jobs was known as "turpentine"; it was filthy, sticky,

backbreaking work. Early turpentiners cut deep into the trunk of a tall pine and hung a bucket at the bottom. The gummy fluid would ooze from the cut and run into the bucket. After the Civil War, with the plantation economy destroyed, southerners were forced to rely more heavily than ever on the forests. Turpentine exploded into the cheap lands of Georgia and Florida. Meanwhile, desperate farmers began cutting the best trees from their woodlands, forming them into rafts, and setting off on trips to the nearest large sawmill. Usually made in summer, when the rivers were high, these log runs were notoriously dangerous. Arms, legs, even bodies, were frequently crushed when the rafts crashed into protruding bluffs.

At about the same time, northeastern and midwestern forests were thinning out, and lumber companies sent "cruisers" south to scout the most promising stands of longleaf. In just a few years millions of acres changed hands. From 1880 to 1920 the annual production of lumber in the South leaped from 1.6 billion board feet to 15.4 billion board feet, most of it longleaf. The scale of the lumbering operations was enormous. On the Escambia above Pensacola, Florida, a river boom—a barrier of floating chained logs—enclosed 50,000 logs until the mills could catch up with the flood of timber floating downstream. Such temporary booms punctuated southern rivers, following the path of the lumberman's ax. Another boom, on Mississippi's Pascagoula River, extended to the middle of the channel and then up the eastern bank for five miles. On slower-moving rivers rafts made up of as much as 50,000 board feet were common.

Most lumbermen believed that the forest was a virtually inexhaustible resource. One 1884 survey predicted that the pine supply in Texas would last 250 years, in Louisiana 100 years, in Georgia eighty years, and in Florida thirty years. In 1909 nearly 140 billion board feet poured out of the southern forests, accounting for 46 percent of all the lumber cut in the United States. Then, suddenly, the supply forecasts began to drop.

By the end of the First World War the old-growth woodlands of the South had shrunk from an area almost the size of Alaska to one slightly larger than Georgia.

*(Continued on page 39)*

NOVEMBER  
1996

# Arts & Entertainment

PREVIEW



## *Classical*

Plácido

Domingo's

Season

Opener

## *Jazz*

The Acid

Genre

## *Popular Music*

Phish In  
and Out of  
the Studio

## *Film*

Kurt  
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*Mother*  
Night

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# Classical Music

BY AUSTIN BAER

## THE DOMINGO EFFECT

Even by the standards of grand opera, the love duet of Antônio Carlos Gomes's *Il Guarany* is bizarre. In the wilds of sixteenth-century Brazil a noble Indian chieftain has fallen under the spell of a Portuguese imperialist's daughter whose beauty also attracts scum both European and Native American, landing her in more perils than the proverbial Pauline. In a corker of a plot twist the hero pops slow poison to get even with the cannibals who are about to dress him for dinner. But custom demands that the victim be granted the carnal favors of the queen—this time none other than his ladylove. From our remove the score sounds derivative of early Verdi, with an exotic overlay. In fact, Verdi himself spoke highly of it. Catching up with *Il Guarany* in 1872, two years after its



The warrior-chieftain

world premiere, at La Scala (and a year after unveiling his own, incomparably richer, exotic masterpiece *Aida*), the great Italian declared the Brazilian newcomer a "truly musical genius." After long neglect Gomes has now found a champion in Plácido Domingo, who recorded *Il Guarany* live in Germany two years ago for Sony Classical. This month, in a stroke of administrative genius, he makes it the opening salvo of his reign

as artistic director of the Washington Opera (November 9–December 1; 202-416-7800). Consider: to have unearthed an exciting grand opera with all the trappings, unspoiled by prior acquaintance, with a New World theme, and from the pen of a New World composer to boot. All this plus a juicy title role for Domingo, the tenorissimo everyone in town is dying to hear.

## SHAKESPEARE SINGS

A bright fellow once observed (in these or very similar words) that Shakespeare's plays, being music, cannot be set to music. Perhaps out of some dim understanding that this is so, no composer of any fame has attempted to set Shakespearean drama to music verbatim. One who came close is Benjamin Britten, whose *A Midsummer Night's Dream* alights at the Metropolitan Opera on November 25, three dozen long years after its world premiere. The adaptation is the handiwork of Britten himself and his lifetime companion and muse, the tenor Peter Pears, and recent scholarship has canvassed their (as it turns out,



Set design by Anthony McDonald

numerous) deviations from the original in excruciating detail. Still, no other libretto preserves more extensive tracts of genuine Shakespearean text or has been set with an acuter ear. Fashions in bardolatry change, of course. To the Victorians, whose musical *Dream* image was Mendelssohn's, Shakespeare's fairies were faeries, gossamer sprites at home in the petals of a rose. By mid twentieth century the zeitgeist had recast them as goblins, dark imps of the id, and thus Britten saw them too. His spider and bat-wing aesthetic will scarcely be lost on the production team of Tim Albery and Antony McDonald, deconstructionists new to the Met but not to the up-to-date theatrical styles of the continent. David Atherton, who conducts, knows well how to sail Britten's currents and undertows; and a first-rate cast, dominated by the chimelike soprano of Sylvia McNair and the smoldering male alto of Jochen Kowalski as the squabbling royal couple of fairyland, promises impersonations of rare witchery. (Performances continue through December 21; 212-362-6000.)

## PORTRAIT OF A PEOPLE

Hannibal Lokumbe's *African Portraits*, on the Philadelphia Orchestra's calendar this month (November 8–12; 215-893-1999), traverses 400 years of the "African-American experience" in fifty-plus swift minutes. The vignettes run a course from prelapsarian joy in a 16th-century West African village through the atrocities of slavery to a celebration of gospel, spirituals, blues, and jazz. Timeless world music meets historic strains grown on American soil. Masters in each style lend the proceedings authenticity as well as eloquence. Nothing is mainstreamed, yet all is fitted into a narrative carried by that quintessentially European invention, the modern symphony orchestra. The instrumental scene painting (especially in sea episodes) is haunting, and the elegy of a violin solo pierces the heart. Nor are the voices of white men excluded: the auctioneer in the slave-market scene is demonized, but the captain of a slaver plying the Middle Passage stands forth (in his be-

nighted white-supremacist way) as a soul not altogether untouched by godliness and human decency. On a Teldec CD with Daniel Barenboim, the blue-chip Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and a splendid assembly of soloists, *African Portraits* sings a powerfully ecumenical song. How exactly to classify it, though, is hard to say. "File Under: Classics and Jazz" advises a tiny note on the CD cover. Well, that's a start. Next question: Under what letter? The answer is *H*—the composer prefers to be known by his first name.

Hannibal and Barenboim

Austin Baer  
is a writer  
based in  
New York.



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# Popular Music and Jazz

BY BOB BLUMENTHAL AND CHARLES M. YOUNG

## CASTING A WIDE NET

Rock-and-roll being the loud branch of folk art, its practitioners rarely know how to read and write music in any formal sense. The members of Phish do, and even more remarkably, they manage to display their considerable skills with such imagination and taste that you never suspect arrogance (like Frank Zappa's) or bombast (like Emerson, Lake & Palmer's). What they do display is a breathtaking command of odd time signatures, sweet harmonies, and catchy melodies with touches of rock, jazz, bluegrass, classical, folk, whimsical jokes, blues, and avant-garde weirdness. Since forming at the University of Vermont, in 1983, they have trained their Neo-Deadhead audience to expect daring improvisations that might lead to screwups and might lead to moments of true awe and wonder. So the complete Phish experience is most readily consumed in concert—you haven't lived until you've seen 20,000 Phish Heads noodle dance—or on last year's double CD *A Live One* (Elektra). This year's album,



Phish: A success in the studio at last

*Billy Breathes* (Elektra), probably rates as their most successful studio effort. Their sense of humor, which has sometimes crossed the line into cuteness, seems to be in check, and that lets the amazing breadth of music speak for itself. Ranging from the most delicate fingerpicking to great washes of feedback, Trey Anastasio's guitar is on particularly admirable display. You may ask yourself, "What's missing here that every other alternative band has had since 1988?" Alienation. These guys don't whine and they don't snarl. They're just damn thrilled to be making music. —C.M.Y.

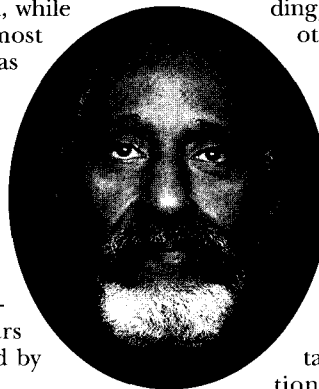
Bob Blumenthal is a jazz critic for The Boston Globe.

Charles M. Young reviews popular music for Playboy, Musician, and other publications.

## SONNY'S DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN

Twenty-five years have passed since the tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins emerged from his last sabbatical. Since then, while his reputation as jazz's most galvanic living soloist has grown, his albums have been panned for failing to document the excitement of his live performances. Milestone, his recording company since 1972, intends to shatter the latter perception with *Silver City*, a two-disc anthology of Rollins's years at the label programmed by the colossus himself.

The results are generally persuasive, especially when Rollins is free-associating at length over strong rhythmic support ("G-Man" and the title track) or looping riffs and outrageous quotations in heated unaccompanied cadenzas ("Autumn Nocturne," "Skylark"). What also emerges clearly is a point



stressed in Chip Stern's excellent liner-note interview with Rollins—that the saxophonist has been absorbed in wedding jazz swing to Caribbean and other dance rhythms, rather than simply replaying his hard-bop triumphs of the 1950s and 1960s. Although the choice has its downside (a preference for electric bass), it has also produced such treats as the celebratory "Duke of Iron" and "Harlem Boys."

Rollins and his wife and manager, Lucille, have taken pains with the selections on *Silver City*, substituting choices late in production to include two tracks from this year's *Sonny Rollins+3*, his strongest album in a decade. The decision was well advised, because Rollins, at age sixty-six, has been performing with the strength of a newcomer and the imagination of jazz's reigning genius. —B.B.

## EXPANDING THE BORDERS OF BEBOP

"Acid jazz" is an elusive concept. The phrase was coined in European dance clubs, where deejays would sample funky instrumentals from the 1960s. Sometimes the term takes in hip-hop variations or rule-breaking avant-garde solo styles; but it always tends to connote a view of jazz that spurns orthodoxy and incorporates alternative elements. Two new albums suggest that acid jazz already has broad horizons.

Medeski Martin & Wood are all about grooves. John Medeski favors early-generation electric keyboards like the clavinet and the Wurlitzer piano, which he locks into infectious patterns with Billy Martin's drums and Chris Wood's upright bass; then the music unravels. *Shack-man* (Gramavision), the fourth MM&W collection, brings a new level of concentration and momentum to the concept. Each track begins by stating a seductive basic

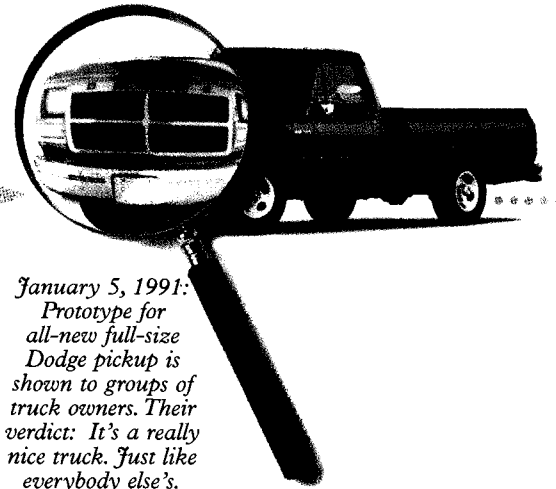
rhythmic premise and then pulls on a single instrumental strand as drums, bass, or keyboards wander off on warped tangents. Simple on the surface, yet new facets emerge with repeated listening.

A more direct line to funky jazz styles is heard in the music of young San Franciscans such as the eight-string guitarist Charlie Hunter and the tenor saxophonist Dave Ellis. After working in Hunter's trio, Ellis formed his own band, which is heard on *Raven* (Monarch). The CD contains several modern jazz classics (by the likes of McCoy Tyner and Wayne Shorter) that receive a new, danceable spin. The jazz/pop standard "Always There"

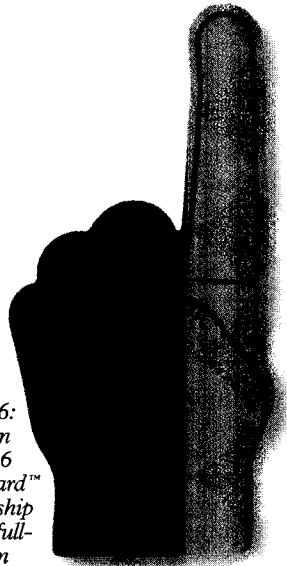
and a Beatles tune are also in the mix, which Ellis dominates with his enveloping sound and emphatic attack. Hunter and the fusion drum pioneer Mike Clark make guest appearances that add extra kick to Ellis's populist approach. —B.B.



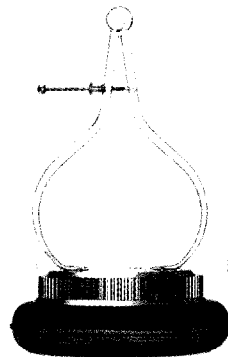
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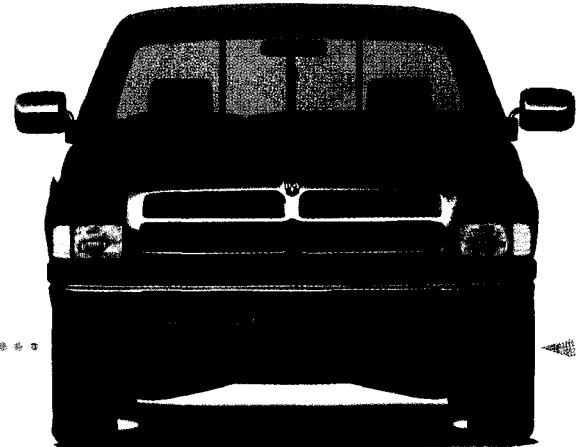
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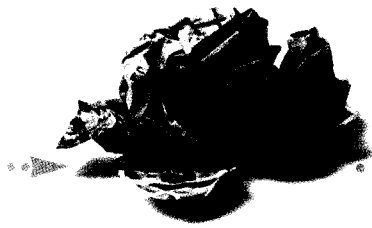
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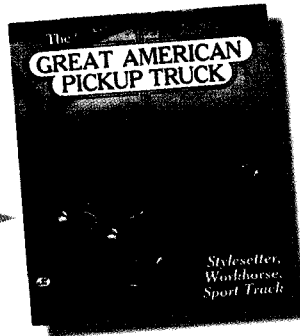
years. But to us, success is a lot more than just avoiding mistakes: It's a truck design that gets your blood pumping. The sound of a V10 engine clearing its throat. Giving people the freedom to create products that aren't for every-

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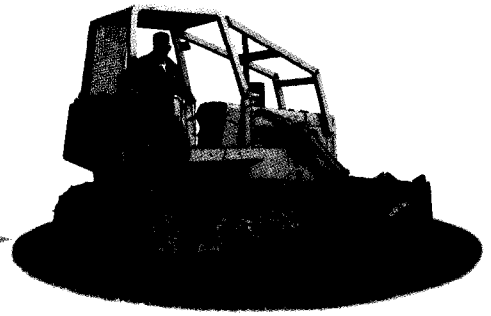




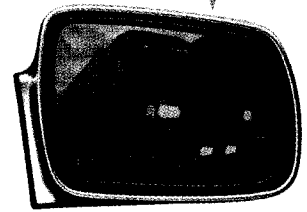
*February 6, 1991:  
With launch just 25 months away,  
design team starts over.*



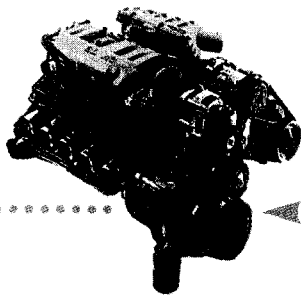
*March 14, 1991:  
Designer discovers a book on the  
history of American pickups.  
Meanwhile in the United Arab  
Emirates, Sheik Hamad Bin  
Hamdan Al-Nahyan is building  
a 60-foot replica of a 1942  
Dodge Power Wagon.*



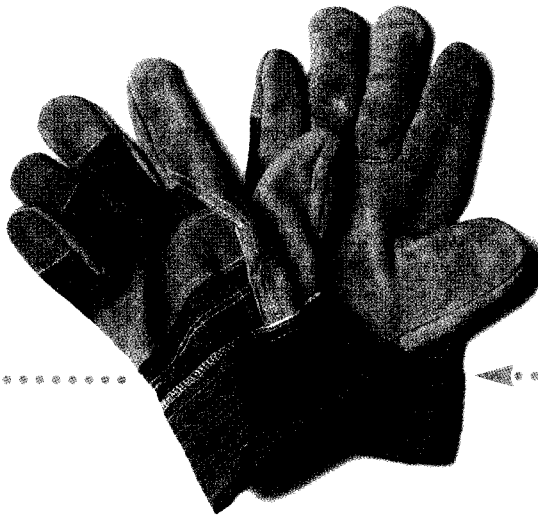
*April 20-24, 1991:  
Design team visits construction  
site, observes how workers really  
use their trucks. Collision with  
'dozer narrowly avoided.*



*June 6, 1991:  
Merging onto I-75  
with 20-ton semi  
on their bumper,  
designers have  
instincts for revised  
design confirmed.*



*April 10, 1992:  
Power train team  
adds Magnum V10,  
cast-iron cousin to the  
400 hp Viper V10 and  
the most powerful engine  
ever in a pickup, as  
power plant option.*



*March 12, 1992:  
Interior design team dons  
thick work gloves to test  
operation of knobs and  
switches in the cab under  
real-world conditions.*



*November 4, 1991:  
Aggressive new truck design is  
shown to consumers. The verdict:  
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Chrysler honchos say, "Build it."*

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# Film

BY ELLA TAYLOR

## LIVING IN THE SHADOWS

Few writers understand as well as Kurt Vonnegut the primacy of unintended consequences over design in shaping our lives, especially amid the lunacy of war. Keith Gordon's wonderfully acute adaptation of Vonnegut's novel *Mother Night* stars Nick Nolte as Howard W. Campbell Jr., an



Down and out once again

American playwright living in Germany and ducking the horrors of World War II by creating a "nation of two" with his beautiful wife, Helga (Sheryl Lee). When an American secret agent (an uncredited John Goodman) persuades Campbell to broadcast anti-Semitic propaganda that contains encoded information for the Allies, he becomes an unwitting Nazi mascot. Devastated by reports of his wife's death, Campbell returns to America and lives aimlessly under a false identity, until his cover is blown by crazed white supremacists. Hailed by them and hounded by Holocaust survivors and American patriots, Campbell becomes the ideological property of all factions. Nothing is what it seems, even when he befriends a fellow artist (a witty Alan Arkin) and when Helga, apparently risen from the dead, returns to him. With his identity crumbled (in one heart-stopping scene Nolte, an old pro at playing broken men, stops dead on a Manhattan street and tells us in voiceover, "I had absolutely no reason to move in any direction"), Campbell winds up on trial for war crimes in an Israeli prison, one cell below the disembodied voice of Adolph Eichmann (Henry Gibson). Gorgeously shot by Tom Richmond, who also shot Gordon's outstanding film *A Midnight Clear*, *Mother Night* captures perfectly Vonnegut's shifts between darkness and light, tragedy and comedy, and his shattering of the moral complacency that divides the world into heroes and villains.

Although he's never less than a magnificent filmmaker, Mike Leigh at times visits a savagery on his characters that sends some moviegoers scuttling for the exits. After the bitter brilliance of *Naked*, the British director's fine new film, *Secrets and Lies*, which won the Palme d'Or at Cannes this year, marks a return to the more generous spirit of his 1990 picture, *Life Is Sweet*. Not that *Secrets and Lies* is flabby or sentimental. In a stunning performance the English stage actress Brenda

## VICTORIAN LOVERS

There's English scenery to burn in *Jude*, a respectful adaptation of *Jude the Obscure*, Thomas Hardy's great novel of lovers ground beneath the wheel of Victorian opprobrium. Directed by Michael Winterbottom, who made the truly horrible killer-lesbian feature *Butterfly Kiss*, *Jude* stars the excellent Christopher Eccleston (the nerdy accountant in *Shallow Grave*), all anguish and sunken eye sockets, as the country lad bent on self-improvement. The slyer they come, the harder they fall in Hardy's austere view. After a brief, disastrous marriage to the seductive wench Arabella (talented Rachel Griffiths, of *Muriel's Wedding* fame), Jude repairs to Christminster to study and fall



Insecure Jude and heartbreaking Sue

in love with his free-spirited and neurotic cousin Sue (a rather too sensible Kate Winslet), who plays him off against the teacher (Liam Cunningham) he idolizes before finally acknowledging her love for Jude. Competent and good-looking though it is, the movie plods along at a sedate pace that does insufficient justice to Hardy's melodrama. When Winterbottom finally starts piling on the shock tactics toward the end, the shift feels more jarring than radical.

## WHEN THE TRUTH COMES OUT

Blethyn plays Cynthia, a single mother crushed by life and supported only by her good-hearted brother Maurice (the versatile Timothy Spall, last seen as the world's worst restaurateur in *Life Is Sweet*). When a skeleton dances out of Cynthia's closet in the form of Hortense (a poised Marianne Jean-Baptiste), whom she gave up for adoption at birth, Cynthia is initially horrified, not least because Hortense is black and a successful optometrist. Taken aback herself by Cynthia's weepy passivity, Hortense nonetheless hangs in, and the two form a warm bond that fills a hole in both their lives. When Cynthia blurts out the truth about Hortense at a family party, she triggers a chain confession of everyone's lies and secrets that leads to bedlam. As always in a Mike Leigh movie,



A mother-and-child reunion

anger and pain rub shoulders with a kind of appalling hilarity to expose the bonds of love and suffering between ordinary people condemned—and redeemed—by their endless struggle to preserve a fragile sense of identity.

Ella Taylor is a film critic for LA Weekly.

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The answer to October's A&E Challenge—"What was the trumpeter John Birks Gillespie's nickname?"—is "Dizzy." Take the A&E Challenge today. There's a new winner every month.

(Continued from page 32)

gia. Forest had covered nearly 300 million acres of the South in 1880. It had been reduced by more than 40 percent, to 178 million acres, by 1919. A scant 39 million acres of virgin forest remained, a mixture of longleaf, other pines, and hardwoods. Already in some areas the only virgin logs left to mill were those that could be dragged from the riverbed. Scavengers began to use long poles to feel for sunken timber.

Bennett slows the boat to steer the log between the piers of a bridge; then he arcs the boat around and guns it toward a muddy riverbank where he's storing a pile of logs until they can be driven to the mill. At the last minute he swerves: the boat misses the bank, but the log runs up onto the shore. "Beautiful," Bennett says. "Just like putting a skier on the beach in a water show."

The next morning a pickup backs a modified boat trailer halfway into the river. Taking turns, the divers use their boats to push the logs into position, and then manhandle them onto the trailer with cant hooks—long bars used as levers, with a movable hook at one end—and winches. The brisk odor of turpentine, from the resin that preserved the wood, hangs in the air.

Before they send their finds off to the mill, Bennett and Ring look them up and down for clues to their history. Most have the V-shaped bottoms of logs cut slowly with axes. One of the logs was squared off in preparation for being used as a ship's mast. Another has slanted cuts, or "cat's face," revealing that the tree was used for turpentine. Most have the triangular gouges left by cant hooks or the narrow rectangles left by iron raft rings.

Ring pauses at the front of the trailer, gazing at a log butt. "Will you take a look at that?" he says to the driver of the pickup. With his diving knife he pokes at the lighter center area of the soaked log. "That beauty's all heart."

"He thinks they're all pretty," says the driver who will take the logs to a mill that specializes in the rare virgin wood. "He sees green in them." Each log brings the divers \$150 to \$200, depending on size. Milled, kiln-dried, and planed, the wood will command \$4.00 to, occasionally, \$16.00 a board foot—significantly more than oak.

The log truck heads south to the Flori-

da-Georgia line and then through the managed forests that feed the paper mills and past the cattle pastures and racehorse farms that have replaced the longleaf forest in much of northern Florida. About five miles beyond the college town of Gainesville the truck turns onto a gravel road. A large white sign, mounted against a long-toothed circular saw blade five feet across, announces GOODWIN HEART PINE COMPANY. This is the only virgin-longleaf mill remaining in the state of Florida.

**T**HE southern lumberjacks of a century ago would hardly recognize Goodwin, set on a mere five acres, as a mill. During the heyday of southern lumbering many sawmills operated on a heroic scale: log ponds stored tens of thousands of longleaf logs, crews of fifty to seventy operated several saws around the clock, twenty-foot-high stacks of boards stretched over clearings the size of several football fields. Obviously, the few logs that today lie submerged in the rivers cannot support operations on such a scale. Even after a planned expansion the Goodwin plant will remain a boutique operation. It includes two large pavilions, like barns without walls, that house saws and other equipment; nearby stand other utility buildings, a sales office, and a garage-size kiln that dries wood so that it won't later crack or warp.

George Goodwin grew up in the forests of southern Georgia, where his father, a chemical engineer, worked for various paper mills. George is tall and athletic, and affects a gruffness that masks an in-



George Goodwin at his mill

*Bennett pushes  
his diving mask onto  
his forehead.  
"I've found a whole  
pile!" he yells.*

trinsic shyness. He has tried his hand at jobs including antique restoration, carpentry, and antique dealing. About twenty years ago a friend who was tagging river sturgeon for a conservation project mentioned that he kept bumping into submerged logs. He dragged one out of the river and brought it to George, who ran a small mill when he wasn't managing his antique business. Goodwin Heart Pine largely grew out of that happenstance.

The mills that handled most of the world's virgin heart-pine logs were set up to saw quickly and in quantity. The Goodwin mill saws a limited amount of wood slowly, with an eye toward conserving as much as possible. Goodwin started out with a vintage circular saw, like the big-toothed disks that torment Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck in cartoons. But its thick spinning teeth created vast amounts of sawdust that might have been usable lumber. Goodwin has since switched to smaller machines that peel off boards with a thin band saw, as if using a scalpel rather than a serrated knife.

Goodwin's life now revolves around this wood. He has sold his house, moved into a doublewide trailer near the mill, and invested everything in the company. He's stockpiling heart pine for a dream house, but he hasn't gotten around to building it. The rewards don't seem to matter. Goodwin is happiest when he's feeding longleaf, board by board, into the planing machine that smooths and shapes the wood. He talks with animation about longleaf's "pizzazz" and "warmth." "This wood has life and light," he says. "I don't see how anyone can help having a passion for this wood once they really understand it."

Goodwin's wife, Carol, a computer analyst, has become a crusader for the longleaf ecosystem. For several decades foresters have encouraged landowners to plant slash and loblolly pine, species that





*Above, an old-growth stand in Georgia; below, a longleaf seedling*

grow fast but produce wood some think is fit only to be paper pulp. Carol has begun a campaign to persuade foresters and landowners that longleaf will bring a bigger payoff in board timber, even if a longer growth period is required. Urgency fuels her effort. Though estimates as high as 10,000 acres have been made, known old-growth longleaf forests total only about 2,000 acres. This landscape is more endangered than the prairie, the redwood groves, or the Brazilian rain forest.

The disappearance of longleaf has as much to do with management as with the demand for lumber. To some extent longleaf has been killed by kindness. At the height of southern lumbering, faced with dwindling forests across the country, Gifford Pinchot, Roosevelt's Forest Service chief, decided that the key to conservation was fire prevention. Since most forest in the South was (and remains) privately owned, Pinchot dispatched fire-prevention specialists to spread the gospel. However well-meaning, this management strategy spelled the beginning of the end for what remained of the longleaf-pine forest.

To thrive, longleaf pine needs an open forest floor cleared by sporadic fire. After germination, longleaf seedlings stay close to the ground for several years. At this stage they look like clumps of grass. Meanwhile, the major growth occurs below ground, as the seedling develops an extensive taproot. Then, at about the age of six or seven, the young tree shoots skyward, growing three or four feet in a single season. At the end of this growth spurt the tree looks like a huge bottle

brush. None of this can happen unless fires, once started by lightning, clear the forest floor of competing brambles and runner oaks. The older longleafs can survive in the absence of these fires, but when they die, no young trees are there to take their place. The woodland gradually becomes a scrub-oak thicket or is replanted with slash or loblolly pine—cash crops. This is what has happened in most of the South.

**W**ILLIAM Bartram, an Englishman who traveled through these forests in the eighteenth century, compared them to parks, and that is still the way they look in the rolling red hills of southern Georgia. Sunlight shines through the virgin longleaf onto a soft forest floor of palmetto, grasses, and wildflowers. This 200-acre remnant longleaf forest has none of the grandiose cathedral qualities of the temperate rain forests of Washington State or California's redwood groves. Its appeal is subtler; it requires contemplation. Then the details emerge: tufts of wire grass, lacy bracken fern, butterfly tea, rayless sunflowers and black-eyed Susans, yellow orchids, purple meadow beauties. The forest floor supports forty plant species per square meter—more than most other ecosystems in North America. It also provides a home for a variety of endangered animals, among them red cockad-

ed woodpeckers and gopher tortoises, which burrow into the soil like rodents. Very old longleaf pines develop flat tops and irregular branches. A Chinese landscape painter could have created the trees in this forest.

Maintaining this oasis requires the careful oversight of Sharon Hermann, a research biologist for the Tall Timbers Research Station, in Tallahassee, and her crew. They must plan what acres to burn. Taking into account weather, geography, and fuel, Hermann must predict how the fire will progress and when it should be stopped. To accommodate the life cycles of insects, wildflowers, and animals, she must plan the burn for early summer, when lightning commonly struck old trees in the days before logging. A fire requires constant attention—and this is for only 200 acres.

The Nature Conservancy and other groups have started longleaf-restoration projects in Texas and Florida. Yet at least a century of detailed work will be needed to produce forests like the ones that William Bartram saw. Not for two centuries will any of these forests produce wood comparable to what divers are pulling out of the rivers. "We're probably not going to see vast forests of three-hundred-year-old trees again," Hermann says. "But we can maintain the components"—trees, wildlife, grasses, and flowers—"while extracting the product."

Even if we can coax the longleaf forests back from the brink, they will all be managed forests. Most foresters agree that longleaf reaches "economic maturity" at seventy to eighty years of age.

These ten-inch trees of the twenty-first century still won't yield twelve-inch boards like those common in old plantation homes. The longleaf lumber of the future may be stronger than pulpwood, but it won't have had the centuries of slow growth that make river-recovered heart pine so hard that it bends nails. Without centuries to build up resin,

the new longleaf heartwood won't have the deep reddish hues that emerge in the older wood after milling. The last of that breed will have been dragged out of a southern river years before. ☼





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## My Sex Mentors

*Barbara Stanwyck, meet  
Janet Reno*

**D**ON'T know whether it's true, but my husband claims I cut myself off from him and it's wrecking our life. Am I depressed? Don't I realize the fun before us—a lifetime of bouncing on a lifetime of beds stretching into the twenty-first century? Because that's all it is. He'll prove it again—if I need proof—right now! That's what he says.

This morning, when I realized I was sitting in my nightie actually *wringing my hands*, I canceled my dentist appointment and tried to just lounge around till I had to get up and start packing, because we are going on vacation tomorrow. I turned on C-SPAN and watched Janet Reno in a press conference till the tension got to me.

Then I flipped to a movie, and there was Barbara Stanwyck, sitting against a background of venetian blinds being told by a suave gangster that he was going to buy a racing stable but the deed would be in *her* name, because she was "clean" (a fantastic chance for her to double-cross him in the future). She just said ignorantly, "But I don't know anything *about* horse racing!" I felt sorry for her; her hair had been very tightly pin curled and she looked half-witted.

I changed it back to Janet Reno. In fact, my husband was on a plane with Janet Reno last week. (She rides way in the back, in the ordinary small seats.) If they'd happened to get into conversation, she could have told him that as a woman, I'm supposed to get plenty of say in what I do in my sex life. Surely that's U.S. law!

Then I flipped over again. It was an outdoor scene. Barbara Stanwyck was leaning on a fence with an attractive elderly man, sort of like E. B. White only with a stopwatch, and they were rejoicing at how fast a young filly named Happy Girl had just flashed by. Obviously Barbara's character was having the simple pleasures that I think a slum background had made impossible for her up till now.

Of course, I feel more comfortable with Barbara Stanwyck when she's mean and wily (though that didn't keep me from feeling sorry for her when she had those bangs like awnings in *Double Indemnity*). I was wondering what *she* would advise me to do or say when he says that "it's just bouncing on beds and it's just fun" thing about something that to me—the woman—is more akin to, well, alligator

wrestling! I closed my eyes, trying to imagine what her advice might be. Her face flickered up to me as if from the bottom of a dark pool when I pictured her in *Ball of Fire*—always either in a showgirl costume or in Gary Cooper's bathrobe, which he gave her just to help her out—and I thought about *The Lady Eve* and *Remember the Night*, the most touching movie ever made. I conjured up the hurt expressions Henry Fonda and Gary Cooper wore while she was doing mean things to them. (I did not think about those movies where she co-starred with Wendell Corey—too confusing.) Why, she'd say I should live my own life. Then, when I still looked blank, she'd say, "Honey, are you in a jam?"

**N**OT like my mother, whose genteel face would harden and she'd say, "You be nice to Mr. So and So," in tones of menace. Unrelieved obedience that would make my husband turn pale! It was like that when I was three, and it was like that when I was eighteen. Be nice to Mr. So and So! Unless Mr. So and So wasn't nice to her! Because if he wasn't her special friend too, then forget it; even if Mr. So and So was my own boyfriend I'd never get to see him. It was ten times weirder than *Stella Dallas*!





Once, I had a boyfriend who came over smoking a cigar and I was getting him to throw it away so that he could come in. But next thing I knew, he was saying something to my mother and she was pretty much wound around the banister. "Oh, not at all! I adore the smell of cigars!" she was saying. Of course, I stayed with him as long as I could! I could practically stay out all night with him.

Once, my mother and I were going to discuss some of these things from the past, and we actually sat down to do it, but it turned out to be a ploy to sell me some Tupperware!

Of course, it makes me somewhat mad that all this is now impinging on my life and my husband's. If my early years could unwind before us like a video, my husband's eyes would fly wide open. "Honey," he'd say afterward, "don't you worry. Forget all I said about beds and whatever. You don't have to do a thing." Then—because men are dogs—in six weeks or so what would happen? "Honey, suppose we forget about the beds, and bouncing, but try it sitting up in a chair, honey, and I'm not pressuring you, dear, just asking about it. It could be a blast."

"No, I can't," I'd say, shaking my head. "I know I should, but I'm just bad! A bad wife. Sorry!"

"Stop saying you're bad!" he'd say. "You always say you're bad."

"I am bad. You deserve somebody normal and good."

"How can I be good and you bad? You're the one who's always worrying about the little puppies!"

I don't know the answer, though there may be one. We'd sit there awhile.

He's so cute and kind. Maybe we could try it.

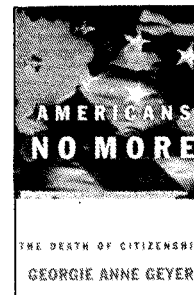
"Promise you won't take advantage of me sitting up in the chair like that to make me look at bills—mainly the Visa?"

"Babe," he'd say, "I don't care if it never gets paid."

There. It's an ending that ought to satisfy all my mentors—with the possible exception of Janet Reno. But any woman who flies coach from Washington to Newark on a Friday, when she could get the FBI to take her in a huge car—I know she is way too nice to care. ☼

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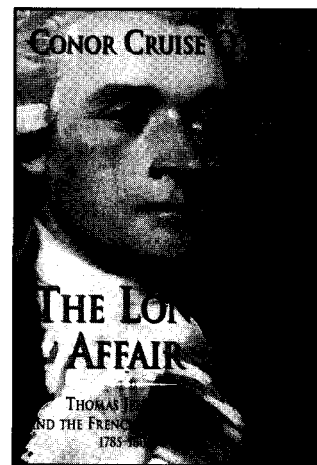
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## Innocents Abroad

*Making Britain fun for a child can  
be fun for a parent, too*

**E**VERY traveler feels the tug of competing yearnings: one for the strange, one for the familiar. To experience the strange—Egyptian pyramids, Hawaiian beaches, Italian frescoes—is the most obvious motivation for leaving home. But even an adventurous traveler is pulled as well by the potent lure of the familiar—a lake-side cabin visited summer after summer, a favorite small hotel in Paris, a particular pub in Dublin. We may travel to see what we have never seen, but few of us don't also seek the comfort of what we already know.

by David Owen

This conflict was much on my mind during a recent week-long trip that my eleven-year-old daughter, Laura, and I took to Great Britain. Planning (and continually revising) our itinerary was largely a matter of seeking a balance between the weird and the well known. This is something that all travelers do, whether consciously or not, but it's crucial with young travelers, who may not yet be sufficiently numbed by ordinary life to welcome novelty as an end in itself. As a result, for the sheer sake of familiarity we did a number of things that I would never have done if I

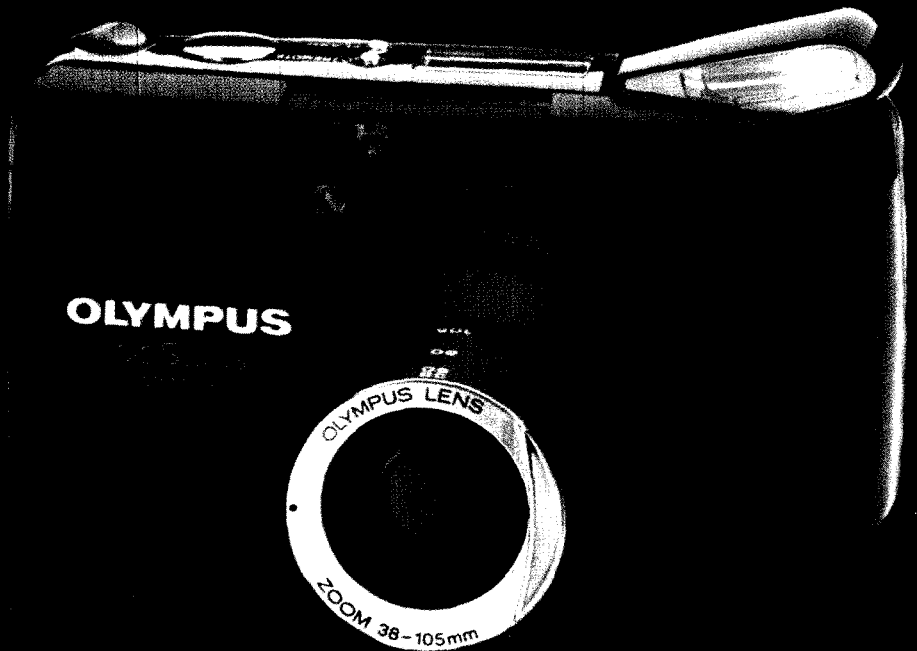
had been traveling with other grown-ups or by myself—such as eat dinner at a Scottish McDonald's.

Great Britain is strange and familiar at the same time, and thus is a good destination for an American kid making a first trip abroad. The language is almost the same, but not quite. The buses have an upstairs. The cars look different and travel on the wrong side of the road. Laura and I had a great time, and I had many opportunities to reflect on what it takes to pull off a successful trip abroad with a kid.

The first challenge faced by any globe-trotting family is that foreign places tend to be alarmingly far away. The ideal travel accessory would be a board-certified anesthesiologist, who could knock out your brood before you left for the airport and gently revive everyone after you had cleared customs on the other end. Keeping fully conscious children entertained for many hours while strapped into uncomfortable seats is no joke. When our kids were little, my wife and I used to travel with enormous bags of library books and hope that we wouldn't have exhausted them all by the time the plane left the ground. A major turning point in our family's emotional history occurred on a plane ride several years ago, when Laura, who was seven, spent thirty minutes reading to her brother, John, who was three. That half hour, during which my wife and I skimmed in-flight magazines and held our breath, seemed almost like a second honeymoon.

Now that the kids are older, long flights don't seem so long. Laura had her pile of books and magazines, and I had mine, and we didn't bother to watch the movie. But most of the other kids on the plane, I would judge, had too little to do. There aren't many three-year-olds who can make it all the way across the Atlantic on a half-filled Pocahontas coloring book. Even Game Boy loses its luster after a couple of thousand air miles. Weary parents may look forward to the prospect of simply being able to sit down for half a day and have their meals brought to them on trays, but their children are unlikely to feel the same way. For kids who aren't eager readers, one of the most agreeable time-killers is a Walk-

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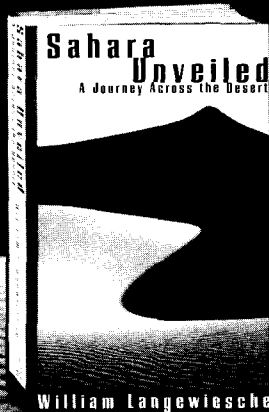
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Distance has another downside: kids need more sleep than grown-ups do, and jet lag affects them more. I can usually bluff my way through a five-or-six-zone time shift, but the change from Eastern Standard to Greenwich Mean Time hit Laura pretty hard. (Neither of us has managed to acquire the knack of falling asleep in an airplane seat.) The transition was made more difficult by the

fact that we took a night flight and thus arrived in London early in the morning, hours before we could check in to our hotel. Wandering around in a sleep-deprivation-induced fog is not the best introduction to a foreign capital. I should have either made sure that our room would be ready at eight in the morning, even at the expense of paying for an extra night, or booked a flight that arrived at a time when it would have seemed normal to go to bed. Our first day in Britain struck Laura as alien and disorienting, and it wouldn't have if I had planned better.

I also made the mistake of thinking that Laura would get a kick out of what I see as a quintessentially British experience: staying in a small, inexpensive bed-and-breakfast hotel in which one's charmingly uncomfortable room is at the end of a maze of stairways and passageways, and where the bathroom is down the hall if not in another postal zone. After one night in such a place I realized my error, and we moved to a hotel with big rooms, real showers, and elevators. My mistake was in overlooking the significance of a surprising fact that I remember reading somewhere: most children's favorite part of Disney World is not Space Mountain but the swimming pool at their hotel. (My kids confirm this. When they wax nostalgic about their own trip to Disney World, which we took a couple of years ago, they talk about the pool, the water slide in the pool, the place where we ate breakfast, and a snack bar where they could make

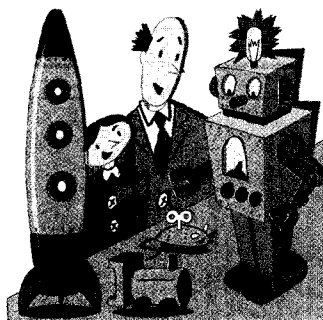
their own sundaes—but almost never the Magic Kingdom.) Laura's and my new hotel didn't have a pool, although the one where we stayed in Edinburgh—the distinguished old Balmoral—did, and that turned out to be Laura's favorite.

Grown-ups like nice hotels too, of course. But kids are more likely to view the place where they stay as the point of the entire exercise. I know this from my own early travel experiences. Among my very first memories are several hazy details of the interior of an old hotel on Cape Ann, in Massachusetts, which I visited with my mother and grandmother when I

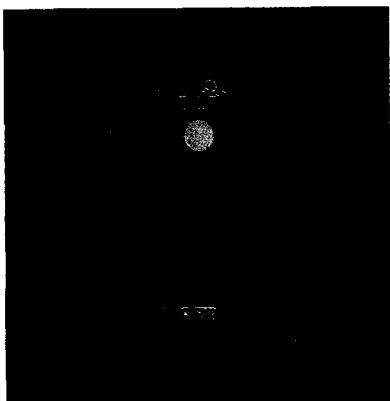
was three. The hotel made a far deeper impression on me than did the ocean, which I was seeing for the first time but can't remember at all. In fact, a good-sized hotel may seem to a kid like a sort of miniature foreign country: there are strange natives, interesting shops, mysterious corridors that can be explored, and the miracle of room service.

**F**OOD is a pivotal issue for underage travelers. Every once in a while one hears about an eight-year-old who eats salad, but most such stories surely belong to the category of urban myth. Even at home my kids have trouble finding much they consider edible. Feeding picky eaters in a foreign country—especially one where the native cuisine is difficult for even an adult to defend—can be harrowing. The lifesaver in Laura's case was pizza, which along with Big Macs and Whoppers has become a sort of culinary lingua franca. Personally, I am sad that the world is becoming so much the same. But it's a big relief for kids.

Although steak-and-kidney pie didn't interest Laura, British candy did. Candy is a subject of intense interest to most children (see the novels of Roald Dahl), and it is one in which they can often claim expertise on a professorial scale. Studying the confectionery peculiarities of another culture permits a young traveler to savor the tension between what is known and what is not. The British Mars bar, Laura discovered, is what an American child would call a Milky Way;

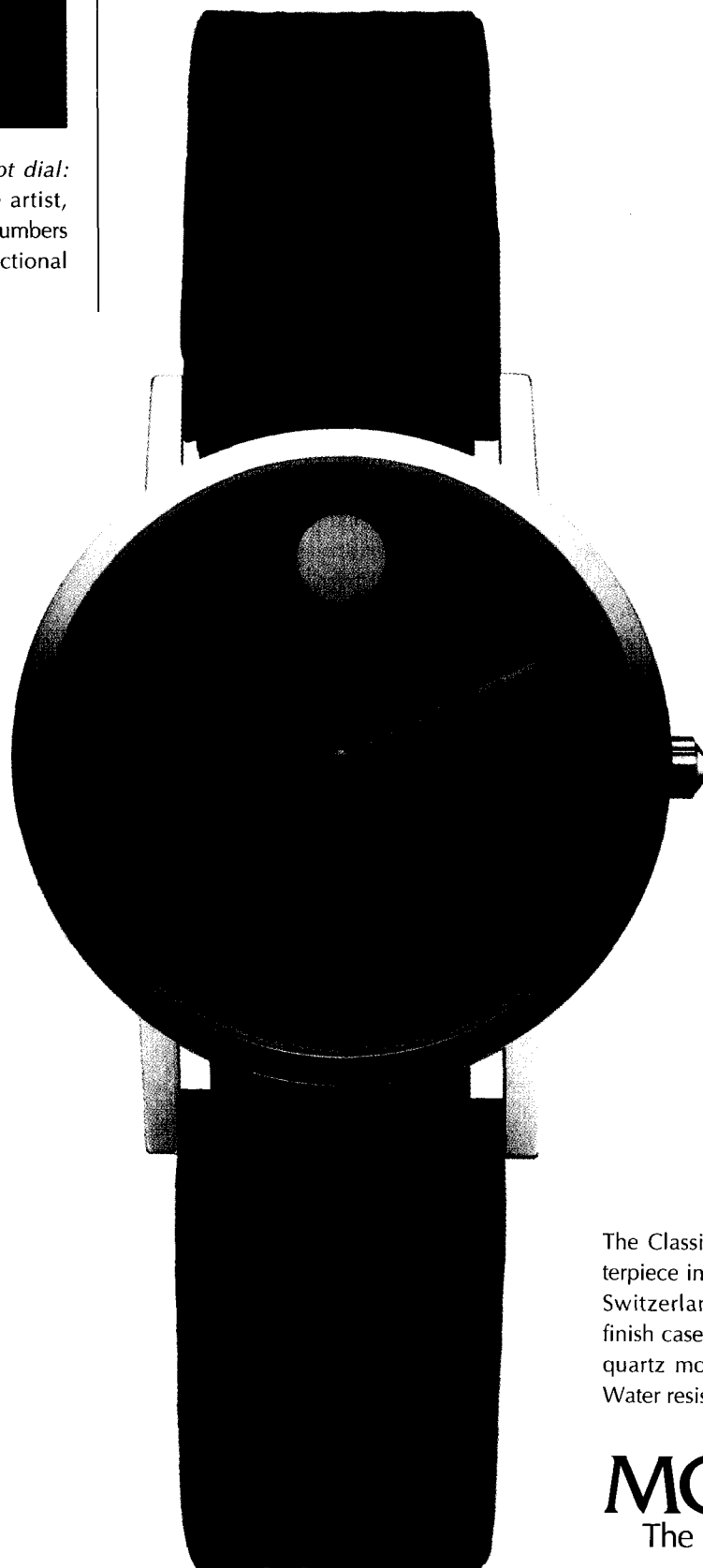






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British Skittles, in contrast, are nearly identical to their American counterparts, with the notable exception of the purple ones, which taste more like Wine Gums (an indigenous sweet that appalled both of us). She took similar pleasure in poring over British teen magazines, searching for Britishisms in the English editions of books she knew from home, and scrutinizing the inventories of British toy stores. Among other discoveries, we learned that in Britain G.I. Joe is known as Action Man.

Shopping for strange candy and hanging around in toy stores may seem to an adult like activities too frivolous to be part of a big, expensive trip abroad. But a kid's world is different from a grown-up's world—and that's not necessarily a bad thing. Indeed, one of the biggest benefits of traveling with children is that they force you to take a hard look at the true entertainment value of your itinerary. Because kids' threshold of boredom is low, they usually can't tolerate the sort of dutiful sightseeing that adult travelers may also hate but seldom resist. A grown-up visiting London, for example, might feel a moral obligation to spend an afternoon at the British Museum. But if the grown-up is traveling with a child, he or she can bypass all that boring plundered sculpture and go instead to the London Dungeon. Situated way over on the other side of the Thames, the London Dungeon is a garish tourist trap. Still, it does a better job than the British Museum of illuminating the most darkly fascinating side of British history. Where else can you learn the exact technique for burning a heretic, or see a lurid re-enactment of a medieval torture involving the abdomen of an immobilized prisoner and a cage containing a hunger-maddened rat? You wouldn't go if you didn't have a kid in tow. But, well, why not?

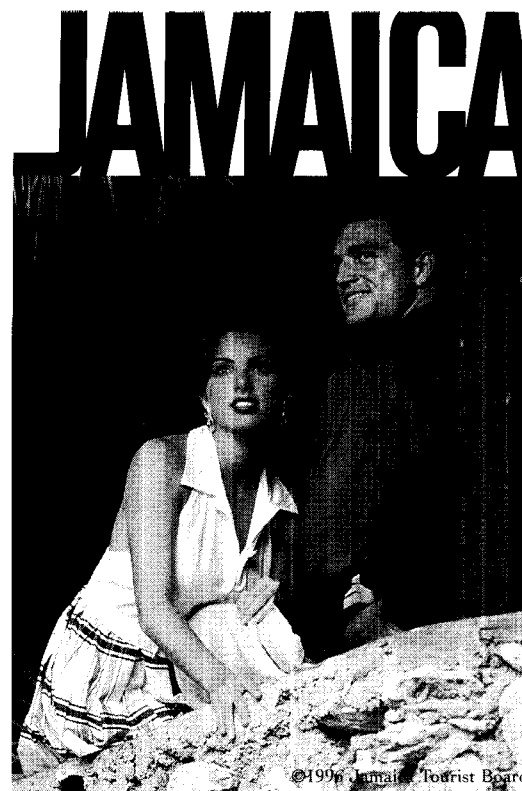
Because we were unconstrained by adult convention, Laura and I also went to the trouble of driving a rented car from Edinburgh to Aberdeen for the sole purpose of taking one of the longest possible sleeper-train rides back to London. Had I been traveling with my wife, the

idea of such an excursion would have seemed silly to both of us. Because I was traveling with an eleven-year-old, I got to have the fun of reading myself to sleep in a gently rocking berth while our train skimmed across northern England. Like her, I had more fun at the London Zoo and Pollock's Toy Museum than at Buckingham Palace or the Tower of London; like her, I got a kick out of snooping in the school-uniform department at Harrods. We skipped the pubs, the plays, and the National Portrait Gallery, but I didn't feel deprived.

One of our trip's key moments came after we had been in London for a day or two. At first Laura had been a little intimidated by the Underground, London's excellent subway system. The Underground is different in every way from New York's subway system, the only other one she knew. In addition to comfortable seats (perhaps the biggest difference), there are variable fares and tickets instead of tokens, and you have to turn your ticket back at the end of your ride. After a couple of trips, though, Laura could handle it all herself, and her feeling of mastery made London open up to her. Acquiring local competence is a major breakthrough for all travelers, but especially for kids. Figuring out the buses, learning to handle the money, making yourself understood to native speakers—all of these are steps that make a visitor feel less like an alien and more like a local. By the time we left, Laura felt that she belonged.

Not all parents would be captivated by the idea of taking a trip abroad designed around the interests of a pre-teenager. But any parent traveling with children would do well to remember that kids and grown-ups have different agendas. The good news is that bend-

ing a trip to the interests of a child can be fun for the adult as well. Although we planned our itinerary with Laura's interests in mind, I never felt that I was condescending. As you get older, youth itself begins to seem like a foreign country. If you have a knowledgeable guide, you can sometimes feel that you are visiting it again. ☼



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# The Price of Immigration

**W**HY was the old immigration—the white European diaspora of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries —“what made this country great,” as sententious orators still insist, whereas the new immigration gives polarizing politicians an irresistible target? To think through this question, to help inform the coming debate on immigration, *The Atlantic* offers the following two articles. David M. Kennedy, the Donald J. McLachlan Professor of American History at Stanford University, sets the two great immigrations, then and now, against each other, finds potentially worrisome patterns in the Southwest that are unprecedented in our history, and yet comes to conclusions that should shame nativism. George J. Borjas, a professor of public policy at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government (and a Cuban émigré), who has done pioneering work on the economics of immigration, shows what economic research can contribute to immigration policy. Borjas, whose numbers reveal that while affluent Americans and the economy as a whole gain from immigration, poorer Americans suffer a multibillion-dollar reduction in wages, argues for fundamental change in the country’s immigration laws—but rational change in the name of justice to the least-advantaged among us, not a xenophobic, demagogue-led retreat from decency, compassion, and memory.





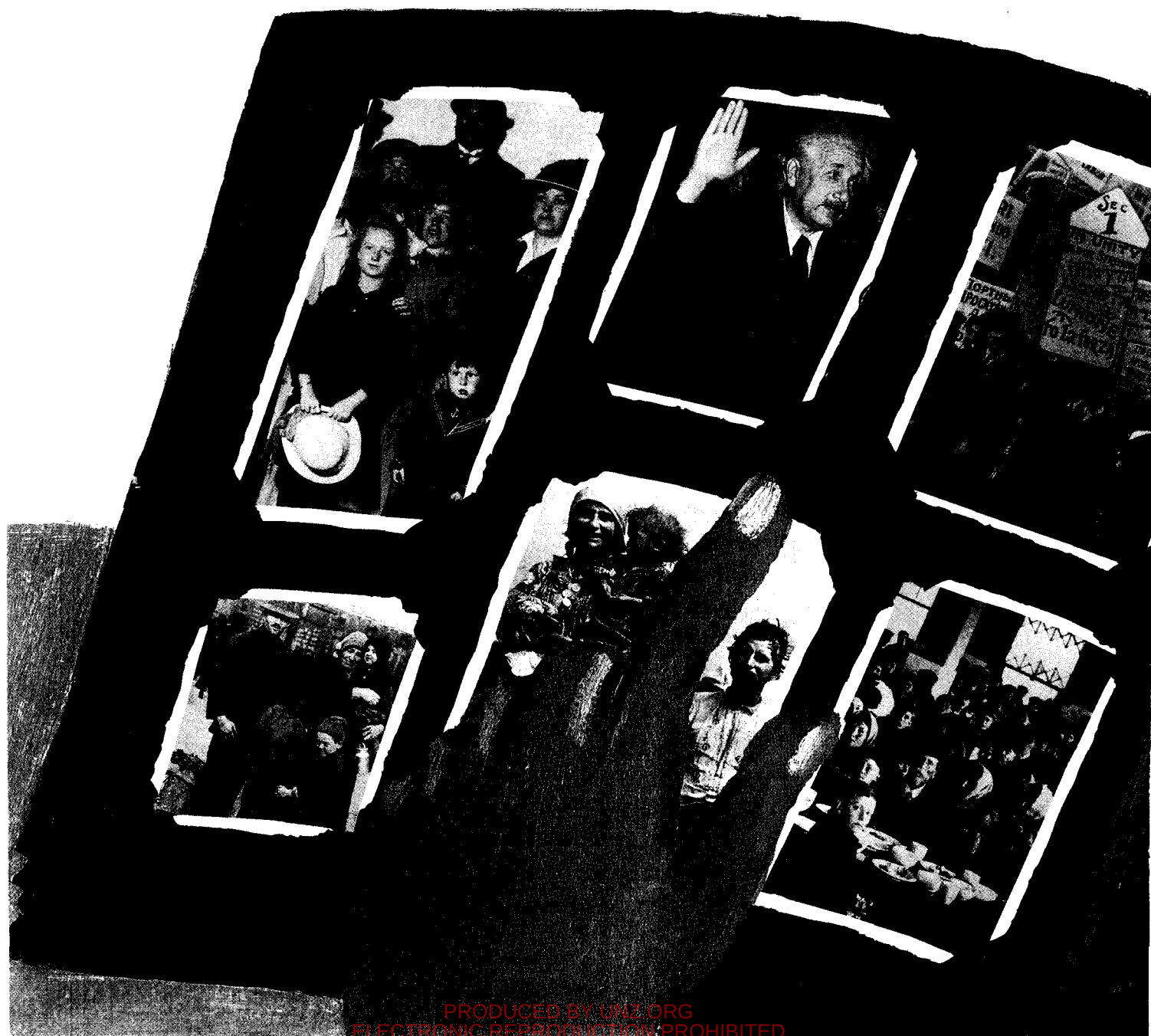
# Can We Still Afford to Be a Nation of Immigrants?

*Comparing yesterday's immigration  
with today's, a historian is  
struck by the unprecedented nature  
of our present situation*

**T** by DAVID M. KENNEDY

HE question in my title implies a premise: that historically the United States has well afforded to be a nation of immigrants—indeed, has benefited handsomely from its good fortune as an immigrant destination. That proposition was once so deeply embedded in our national mythology as to be axiomatic. More than a century ago, for example, in the proclamation that made Thanksgiving Day a national holiday, Abraham Lincoln gave thanks to God for having “largely augmented our free population by emancipation and by immigration.”

Lincoln spoke those words when there were but 34 million Americans and half a continent remained to be settled. Today, however, the United States is a nation of some 264 million souls on a continent developed beyond Lincoln's imagination. It is also a nation



experiencing immigration on a scale never before seen. In the past three decades, since the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, the first major revision in American immigration statutes since the historic closure of immigration in the 1920s, some 20 million immigrants have entered the United States. To put those numbers in perspective: prior to 1965 the period of heaviest immigration to the United States was the quarter century preceding the First World War, when some 17 million people entered the country—roughly half the total number of Europeans who migrated to the United States in the century after 1820 (along with several hundred thousand Asians). The last pre-war census, in 1910, counted about 13.5 million foreign-born people in the American population, in contrast to about 22.5 million in 1994. Historians know a great deal about those earlier immigrants—why they came, how they ended up, what their impact was on the America of their day. Whether America's historical experience with immigration provides a useful guide to thinking about the present case is the principal question I want to address. I want not only to explore the substantive issue of immigration but also to test the proposition that the discipline of history has some value as a way of knowing and thinking about the world.







With respect to immigration itself, I intend to explore two sets of questions.

- Why did people migrate to America in the past, and what were the consequences, for them and for American society, once they landed?
- Why are people migrating to America today, and what might be the consequences, for them and for American society, of their presence in such numbers?

### The Pull of America

**A** GENERATION or two ago upbeat answers to the first pair of questions so pervaded the culture that they cropped up in the most exotic places—in Tunisia, for example, on July 9, 1943. The occasion was the eve of the invasion of Sicily, and General George S. Patton Jr. was addressing his troops, who were about to embark for the battle. He urged, “When we land, we will meet German and Italian soldiers whom it is our honor and privilege to attack and destroy. Many of you have in your veins German and Italian blood, but remember that these ancestors of yours so loved freedom that they gave up home and country to cross the ocean in search of liberty. The ancestors of the people we shall kill lacked the courage to make such a sacrifice and continued as slaves.”

*Above: This 1850 cartoon was captioned “Welcome to all!” The signs proclaim the many benefits of the New World. Right: an 1855 lithograph urged newly arrived immigrants fleeing the “tired” Old World to settle in the promising Dakota Territory*

A radically different explanation of immigration has also historically been at work in the American mind. As the noted social scientist Edward Alsworth Ross put it in 1914:

Observe immigrants not as they come travel-worn up the gang-plank, nor as they issue toil-begrimed from pit’s



In his own inimitable idiom Patton was invoking what for most Americans was—and still is—the standard explanation of who their immigrant forebears were, why they left their old countries, and what was their effect on American society. In this explanation immigrants were the main-chance-seeking and most energetic, entrepreneurial, and freedom-loving members of their Old World societies. They were drawn out of Europe by the irresistible magnet of American opportunity and liberty, and their galvanizing influence on American society made this country the greatest in the world.



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mouth or mill-gate, but in their gatherings, washed, combed, and in their Sunday best. . . . [They] are hirsute, low-browed, big-faced persons of obviously low mentality. . . . They simply look out of place in black clothes and stiff collar, since clearly they belong in skins, in wattled huts at the close of the Great Ice Age. These ox-like men are descendants of those who always stayed behind.

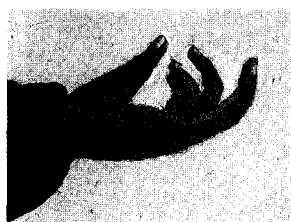
Ross was describing in these invidious terms what he and his turn-of-the-century contemporaries called the “new” immigrants—new because they came predominantly from eastern and southern Europe, as distinct from the “old,” early-and-mid-nineteenth-century immigrants, who had come mainly from northern and western Europe. Ironically, Ross was also talking about the parents of those very troops (at least the Italian-American troops) whom Patton addressed in 1943.

Between those two poles of explanation American views of immigration have oscillated. On the one hand, as Patton reminds us, immigrants were judged to be noble souls, tugged by the lodestone of American opportunity, whose talents and genius and love of liberty account for the

## The Push of Europe

**F**OR the first three centuries or so after the European discovery of the New World the principal source of immigrants to the two American continents and the Caribbean was not Europe but Africa. Only in the early nineteenth century did the accumulated total of European settlers in the New World exceed the approximately 10 million Africans who had made the trans-Atlantic voyage in the years since 1492. To explain the African diaspora by citing entrepreneurial instincts, the love of democracy, or the freely chosen decisions of migrants to follow the lodestar of American promise would be a mockery. Clearly, the involuntary movement of those 10 million Africans is best explained not in terms of their individual characters and choices but in terms of the catastrophically disruptive expansion of large-scale plantation agriculture and its accursed corollary, large-scale commercial slavery.

A comparable—though, to be sure, not identical—element of involuntariness characterized emigration from nine-



**T**hree circumstances eased immigration in the past—the relatively small number of immigrants present at any given time, their diversity, and U.S. economic vitality.

magnificent American character. On the other hand, as in Ross’s view, especially if they had the misfortune to arrive on a more recent boat, immigrants were thought to be degraded, freeloading louts, a blight on the national character and a drain on the economy—the kind of people described all too literally, so the argument goes, by Emma Lazarus’s famous inscription on the base of the Statue of Liberty: “your tired, your poor . . . the wretched refuse of your teeming shore.”

Yet for all their differences, the two views have several things in common. Both explain immigration in terms of the moral character of immigrants. Both understand immigration as a matter of individual choice. And both implicitly invoke the American magnet as the irresistible force that put people in motion, drawing them either to opportunity or to dependency.

Those concepts do not bear close analysis as adequate explanations for the movement of some 35 million human beings over the course of a century. This was a historical phenomenon too huge and too specific in time to be sufficiently accounted for by summing 35 million decisions supposedly stimulated by the suddenly irresistible gravitational attraction of a far-off continent.

teenth-century Europe. Any generalization about what prompted a phenomenon as long-lived and complicated as the great European migration must, of course, be subject to many qualifications. All discussions of the migration process recognize both push and pull factors. But at bottom the evidence convincingly supports the argument that *disruption* is essential to the movement of people on such a scale. And, as in the African case, the best, most comprehensive explanation for a process that eventually put some 35 million people in motion is to be found in two convulsively disruptive developments that lay far beyond the control of individual Europeans. Those developments had their historical dynamic within the context of European, not American, history.

The first of these needs little elaboration. It was, quite simply, population growth. In the nineteenth century the population of Europe more than doubled, from some 200 million to more than 400 million, even after about 70 million people had left Europe altogether. (Only half of these, it should be noted, went to the United States—one among many clues that the American-magnet explanation is inadequate.) That population boom was the indispensable precondition for Europe to export people on the scale that it did. And the boom owed little to American stimulus; rather, it was a product of





aspects of European historical evolution, especially improvements in diet, sanitation, and disease control.

The second development was more complex, but we know it by a familiar name: the Industrial Revolution. It includes the closely associated revolution in agricultural productivity. Wherever it occurred, the Industrial Revolution shook people loose from traditional ways of life. It made factory workers out of artisans and, even more dramatically, turned millions of rural farmers into urban wage-laborers. Most of those migrants from countryside to city, from agriculture to industry, remained within their country of origin, or at least within Europe. But in the early stages of industrialization the movement of people, like the investment of capital during the unbridled early days of industrialism, was often more than what the market could bear. In time most European societies reached a kind of equilibrium, absorbing their own workers into their own wage markets. But in the typical transitional phase some workers who had left artisanal or agricultural employments could not be reabsorbed domestically in European cities. They thus migrated overseas.

The large scholarly literature documenting this process might be summarized as follows: Imagine a map of Europe. Across this map a time line traces the evolution of the Industrial Revolution. From a point in the British Isles in the late eighteenth century the line crosses to the Low Countries and Germany in the early and mid nineteenth century and to eastern and southern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Across the same map a second line traces the chronological evolution of migration to the United States. As it happens, the two lines are almost precisely congruent—migration came principally from the British Isles in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, then mainly from Germany, and finally from the great watersheds of the Vistula and the Danube and the mountain ranges of the Apennines and Carpathians to the south and east.

The congruence of those lines is not coincidental. Industrialization, in this view, is *the* root cause and the most powerful single variable explaining the timing, the scale, the geographic evolution, and the composition of the great European migration.

For another perspective on the importance of understanding the European migration from a European point of view, consider the lyrics of a nineteenth-century Italian folk song called "The Wives of the Americans." In this case, the "Americans" were men who had gone off to America and left their wives behind in Italy—specifically, the southern region of Campania. In fact, men, young men in particular, predominated in the nineteenth-century migratory stream, and their predominance constitutes a reliable indicator of their purposes. Many of them never intended to settle permanently elsewhere but hoped to work abroad for a time and eventually return to the old country. Repatriation rates for European immigrants averaged nearly 40 percent. Only the Jews and the Irish did

not go home again in significant numbers. For some later, "new" immigrant groups, especially from the southern Danube regions, repatriation rates ran as high as 80 percent.

The song describes the wives of the Americans going to church and praying, "Send money, my husband. Send more money. The money you sent earlier I have already spent. I spent it on my lover. I spent it with pleasure. Send more money, you *cornuto fottuto* [damnable cuckold]." Those lyrics conjure an image of immigration quite different from the one General Patton urged on his Italian-American troops in 1943. Together with the figures on repatriation, they offer a strong corrective to uncritical reliance on the American-magnet explanation for the past century's European migration.

## The Immigrants in America

**W**HAT happened to European immigrants, and to American society, once they arrived? Much historical inquiry on this point focuses on immigrant hardship and on recurrent episodes of nativism, anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism, and anti-foreign-radicalism, from the Know-Nothing movement of the 1850s to the American Protective Association of the late nineteenth century and the revived Ku Klux Klan of the early twentieth century, culminating in the highly restrictive immigration legislation of the 1920s. Those are important elements in the history of American immigration, and we would forget them at our peril. But getting the question right is the most challenging part of any historical investigation, and there is an analytically richer question to be asked than Why did immigrants meet sometimes nasty difficulties?

An even more intriguing question is How did tens of millions of newcomers manage to accommodate themselves to America, and America to them, without more social disruption? How can we explain this society's relative success—and success I believe it was—in making space so rapidly for so many people?

The explanation is surely not wise social policy. Beyond minimal monitoring at the ports of entry, no public policy addressed the condition of immigrants once they were cleared off Castle Garden or Ellis Island. But three specific historical circumstances, taken together, go a long way toward composing an answer to the question.

First, somewhat surprisingly, for all their numbers, immigrants—even the 17 million who arrived from 1890 to 1914—never made up a very large component of the already enormous society that was turn-of-the-century America. The census of 1910 records the highest percentage of foreign-born people ever resident in the United States: 14.7 percent. Now, 14.7 percent is not a trivial proportion, but it is a decided minority, and relative to other societies that have received large numbers of immigrants, a small minority. The compa-

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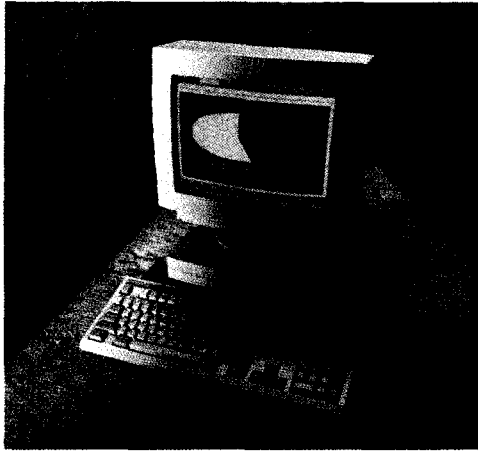
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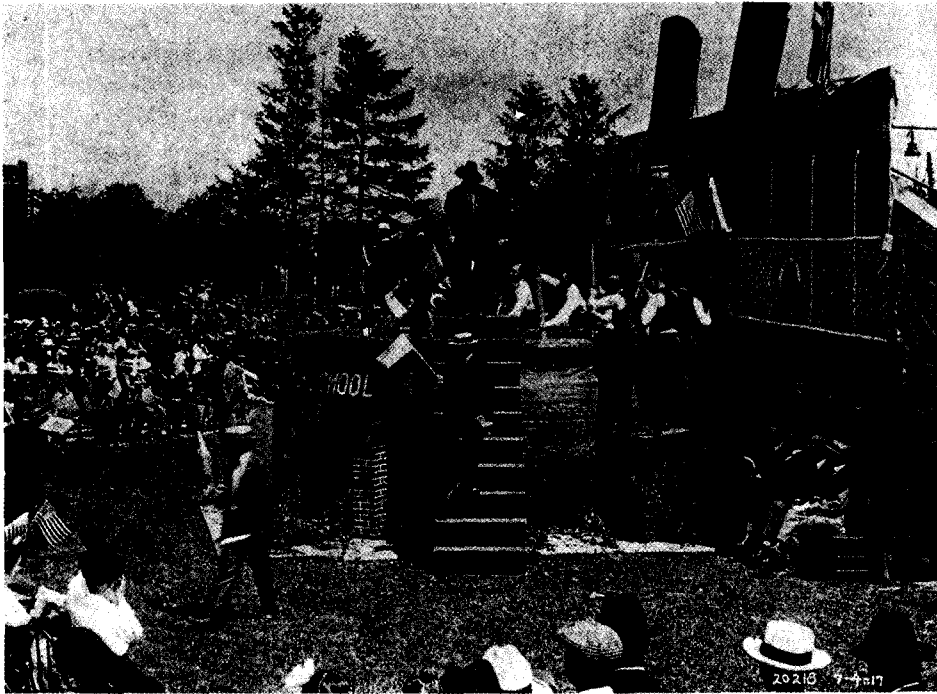
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**Above:** *On Independence Day, 1917, graduates of the Ford Motor Company English School emerge from a "melting pot" after nine months of language lessons. Below: Italian stonecutters at work on the Library of Congress building, 1894*

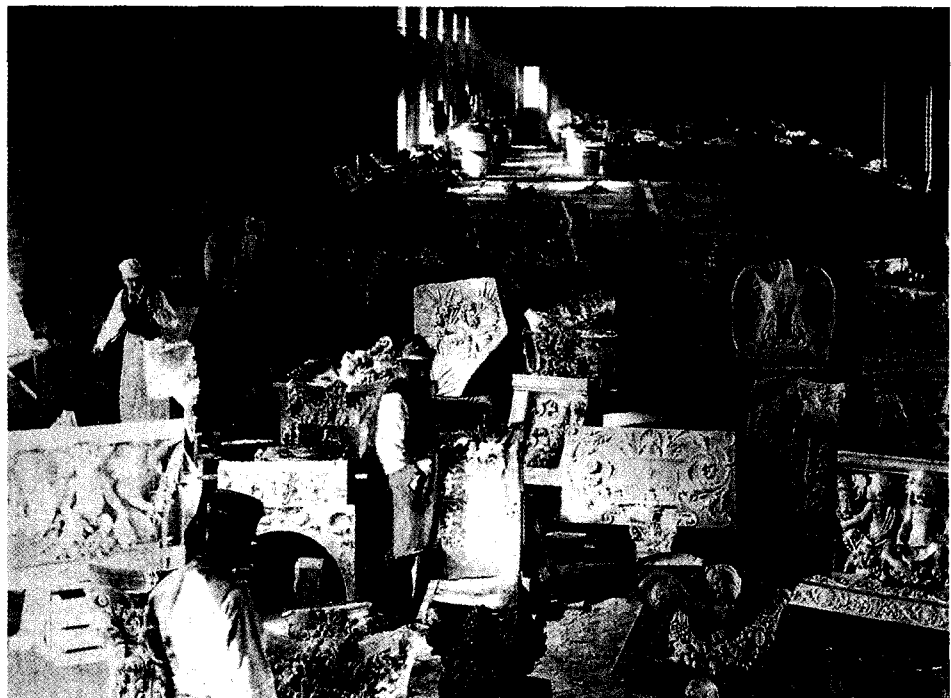
rable figures in Australia and Canada at approximately the same time were 17 percent and more than 20 percent, and even higher in Argentina. So here is one circumstance accounting for the relative lack of social conflict surrounding immigration a century ago: at any given moment immigrants were a relatively small presence in the larger society.

A second circumstance was economic. Immigrants supplied the labor that a growing economy urgently demanded. What is more, economic growth allowed the accommodation of newcomers without forcing thorny questions of redistribution—always the occasion for social contest and upheaval. Here, as so often in American history, especially during the period of heavy immigration before the First World War, economic growth worked as a pre-emptive solution to potential social conflict.

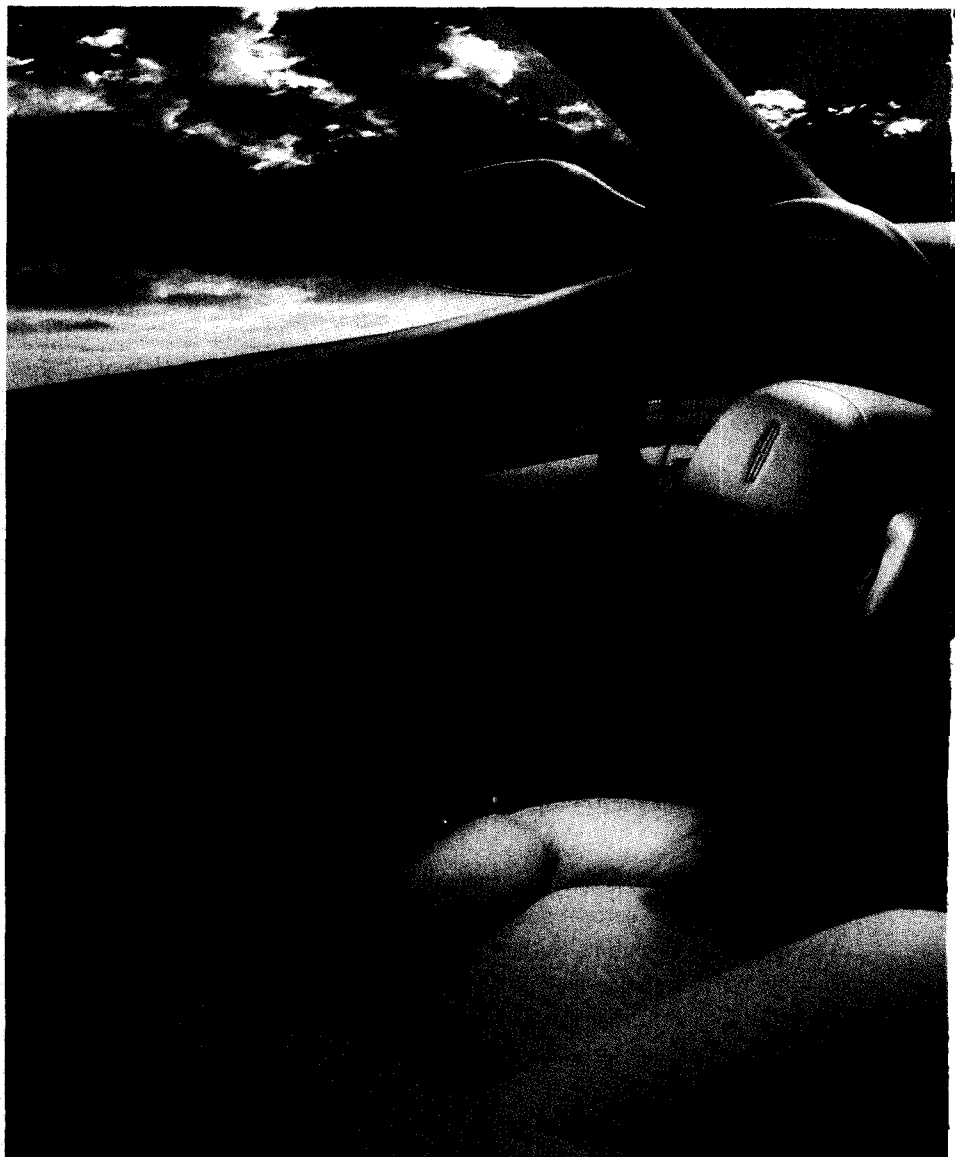
The third circumstance was more complicated than sheer

Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The states with the most immigrants, not incidentally, also had per capita incomes higher than the national average—an important fact pertinent to understanding the relationship between immigration and economic vitality.

The varied composition and broad dispersal of the immigrant stream carried certain crucial implications, one being that no immigrant group could realistically aspire to preserve its Old World culture intact for more than a few generations at best. To be sure, many groups made strenuous efforts to do just that. Legend to the contrary, last century's



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immigrants did not cast their Old World habits and languages overboard before their ship steamed into New York Harbor. In fact, many groups heroically exerted themselves to sustain their religions, tongues, and ways of life. The Catholic school system, which for a generation or two in some American cities educated nearly as many students as the public school system, eloquently testified to the commitment of some immigrant communities to resist assimilation. But circumstances weighed heavily against the success of such efforts. The virtual extinction of the parochial school system in the past generation—the empty schools and dilapidated parish buildings that litter the inner cores of the old immigrant cities—bears mute witness both to the ambition and to the ultimate failure of those efforts to maintain cultural distinctiveness.

A second and no less important implication of pluralism was that neither any single immigrant group nor immigrants as a whole could realistically mount any kind of effective challenge to the existing society's way of doing things. No single group had sufficient weight in any jurisdiction larger

## Today's Immigration

**T**HE biggest apparent novelty in current immigration is its source, or sources. Well over half of the immigration of the past thirty years has come from just seven countries: Mexico, the Philippines, China (I am including Taiwan), Vietnam, Korea, India, and the Dominican Republic.

Not a single European country is on that list. Here, it would seem, is something new under the historical sun. Europe has dried up as a source of immigration and been replaced by new sources in Latin America and Asia.

And yet if we remember what caused the great European migration, the novelty of the current immigration stream is significantly diminished. Though particular circumstances vary, most of the countries now sending large numbers of immigrants to the United States are undergoing the same convulsive demographic and economic disruptions that made migrants out of so many nineteenth-century Europeans: population growth and the relatively early stages of their own industrial revolutions.



**N**o previous immigrant group had the size and concentration and easy access to its original culture that the Mexican immigrant group in the Southwest has today.

than a municipality to dictate a new political order. And there was little likelihood that Polish Jews and Italian Catholics and Orthodox Greeks could find a common language, much less common ground for political action.

To recapitulate: The most comprehensive explanation of the causes of immigration a century ago is to be found in the disruptions visited on European society by population growth and the Industrial Revolution. The United States was, to use the language of the law, the incidental beneficiary of that upheaval. The swelling immigrant neighborhoods in turn-of-the-century American cities were, in effect, by-products of the urbanization of Europe. And once landed in America, immigrants accommodated themselves to the larger society—not always easily assimilating, but at least working out a *modus vivendi*—without the kinds of conflicts that have afflicted other multinational societies. That mostly peaceful process of accommodation came about because of the relatively small numbers of immigrants at any given time, because of the health of the economy, and because of the constraints on alternatives to accommodation inherent in the plural and dispersed character of the immigrant stream.

Having lit this little lamp of historical learning, I would like to carry it forward and see if it can illuminate the present.

Mexico, by far the leading supplier of immigrants to the United States, conforms precisely to that pattern. Since the Second World War the Mexican population has more than tripled—a rate of growth that recollects, indeed exceeds, that of nineteenth-century Europe. And as in Europe a century ago, population explosion has touched off heavy internal migration, from rural to urban areas. By some reckonings, Mexico City has become the largest city in the world, with 20 million inhabitants and an in-migration from the Mexican countryside estimated at 1,000 people a day.

Also since the Second World War the Mexican economy, despite periodic problems, has grown at double the average rate of the U.S. economy. Rapid industrialization has been accompanied by the swift and widespread commercialization of Mexican agriculture. A Mexican “green revolution,” flowing from improvements in mechanical processing, fertilizers, and insecticides, has in fact exacerbated the usual disruptions attendant on rapid industrialization: depopulation of the countryside, urban in-migration, and movement across the national border. But as in nineteenth-century Europe, most of the movement has been within Mexico itself. Since 1970 some five million Mexicans have entered the United States to stay; probably more than 10 million have moved to Mexico City alone.

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Thus we are in the presence of a familiar historical phenomenon, impelled by developments that are for all practical purposes identical to those that ignited the great European migration of a century ago.

### What Does the Future Hold?

**I**F the causes of present-day immigration are familiar, what will be the consequences for today's immigrants and tomorrow's America?

I have suggested that three historical circumstances eased the accommodation between immigrants and the American society of a century ago—the relatively small number of immigrants present at any given time, the needs and vitality of the economy, and the plural and distributed character of the immigrant stream. How do those factors weigh in an analysis of immigration today?

With respect to numbers, the historical comparison gives a basis for confidence that the answer to our original question—Can we still afford to be a nation of immigrants?—is yes. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that as of 1994 foreign-born people represented 8.7 percent of the American population, or just a bit more than half the proportion they made up in the census of 1910. (Comparable recent numbers for Canada and Australia, incidentally, are approximately 16 percent and 22 percent.) So, with reference to both American historical experience and contemporary experience in other countries, the *relative* incidence of current immigra-

tion to the United States is rather modest. Surely the United States at the end of the twentieth century is resourceful enough to deal with an immigrant inflow proportionally half what American society managed to deal with quite successfully in the early years of this century.

With reference to the needs and vitality of the economy, the historical comparison is more complicated. Economic theory suggests that immigration is a bargain for any receiving society, because it augments the labor supply, one of the three principal factors of production (along with land and capital), essentially free of cost. The sending society bears the burden of feeding and raising a worker to the age when he or she can enter the labor market. If at that point the person emigrates and finds productive employment elsewhere, the source society has in effect subsidized the economy of the host society. That scenario essentially describes the historical American case, in which fresh supplies of immigrant labor underwrote the nation's phenomenal industrial surge in the half century after the Civil War.

The theory is subject to many qualifications. Unskilled immigrant workers may indeed increase gross economic output, as they did from the Pittsburgh blast furnaces to the Chicago packinghouses a century ago, and as they do today in garment shops and electronic assembly plants from Los Angeles to Houston. But as productivity has become more dependent on knowledge and skill, the net value of unskilled immigrant labor has decreased, a point that informs much of the current case for restricting immigration. Yet it is important to note that argument on this point turns on the *relative* contribution of low-skill workers to overall output; the theory is still unimpeachable in its insistence on the *absolute* value of an additional worker, from whatever source, immigrant or native. Nevertheless, large numbers of unskilled immigrants may in the long run retard still higher potential outputs, because the inexpensive labor supply that they provide diminishes incentives to substitute capital and improved technology for labor, and thus inhibits productivity gains. On the other hand, just to complicate the calculation further, insofar as the host society continues to need a certain amount of low-skill work done, the availability of unskilled immigrants may *increase* the economy's overall efficiency by freeing significant numbers of better-educated native workers to pursue higher-productivity employment. And overhanging all this part of the immigration debate is the question of whose ox is gored. Low-skill immigrants may benefit the economy as a whole, but may at the same time impose substantial hardships on the low-skill native workers with whom they are in direct competition for jobs and wages.

Of course, the theory that immigration subsidizes the host economy is true only insofar as the immigrant in question is indeed a worker, a positive contributor to the productive apparatus of the destination society. Even the crude American immigration-control system of the nineteenth

---

### TORN SHADES

How, in the first place, did  
they get torn—pulled down hard  
too many times: to hide a blow,  
or sex, or a man  
in stained pajamas? The tear blade-shaped,  
serrated, in tatters. And once,  
in a house flatside to a gas station,  
as snow fell at a speed and angle you could lean on,  
two small hands (a patch of throat, a whip  
of hair across her face)—  
two small hands  
parting a torn shade  
to welcome a wedge of gray sunlight into that room.

—THOMAS LUX





***Los Angeles, 1994: In a display of political unity a largely Hispanic crowd marches against a California ballot measure that would deny social services to illegal immigrants***

century recognized that fact, when it barred people likely to become social dependents, such as the chronically ill or known criminals. The issue of dependency is particularly vexatious in the United States today for two reasons. First, the 1965 legislation contained generous clauses providing for “family reunification,” under the terms of which a significant portion of current immigrants are admitted not as workers but as the spouses, children, parents, and siblings of citizens or legally resident aliens. In 1993, a typical year, fewer than 20 percent of immigrants entered under “employment-based” criteria.

Because of family-reunification provisions, the current immigrant population differs from previous immigrant groups in at least two ways: it is no longer predominantly male and, even more strikingly, it is older. The percentage of immigrants over sixty-five exceeds the percentage of natives in that age group, and immigrants over sixty-five are two and a half times as likely as natives to be dependent on Supplemental Security Income, the principal federal program making cash payments to the indigent elderly. Newspaper accounts suggest that some families have brought their relatives here under the family-reunification provisions in the law expressly for the purpose of gaining access to SSI. Thus it appears that the availability of welfare programs—programs that did not exist a century ago—has combined with the family-reunification provisions to create new incentives for immigration that complicate comparisons of the economics of

immigration today with that in the nineteenth century.

But on balance, though today’s low-skill immigrants may not contribute as weightily to the economy as did their European counterparts a hundred years ago, and though some do indeed end up dependent on public assistance, as a group they make a positive economic contribution nevertheless. It is no accident that today’s immigrants are concentrated in the richest states, among them California (home to fully one third of the country’s immigrant population), just as those of the 1920s were. And just as in that earlier era, immigrants

are not parasitic on the “native” economy but productive participants in it. The principal motivation for immigration remains what it was in the past: the search for productive employment. Most immigrants come in search of work, and most find it. Among working-age males, immigrant labor-force-participation rates and unemployment rates are statistically indistinguishable from those for native workers. The ancient wisdom still holds: *Ubi est pane, ibi est patria* (“Where there is bread, there is my country”). Not simply geography but also that powerful economic logic explains why Mexico is the principal contributor of immigrants to the United States today: the income gap between the United States and Mexico is the largest between any two contiguous countries in the world.

One study, by the Stanford economist Clark W. Reynolds, estimated the future labor-market characteristics and prospects for economic growth in Mexico and the United States. For Mexico to absorb all the new potential entrants into its own labor markets, Reynolds concluded, its economy would have to grow at the improbably high rate of some seven percent a year. The United States, in contrast, if its economy is to grow at a rate of three percent a year, must find somewhere between five million and 15 million more workers than can be supplied by domestic sources. Reynolds’s conclusion was obvious: Mexico and the United States need each other, the one to ease pressure on its employment markets, the other to find sufficient labor to sustain acceptable levels of economic growth. If Reynolds is right, the question with which I began—Can we still afford to be a nation of immigrants?—may be wrongly put. The proper question may be Can we afford *not* to be? (For another perspective on this question see the following article by George J. Borjas.)

## The Reconquista

**B**UT if economic necessity requires that the United States be a nation of immigrants into the indefinite future, as it has been for so much of its past, some important questions remain. Neither men nor societies live by bread alone, and present-day immigration raises historically unprecedented issues in the cultural and political realms.

Pluralism—the variety and dispersal of the immigrant stream—made it easier for millions of European immigrants to accommodate themselves to American society. Today, however, one large immigrant stream is flowing into a defined region from a single cultural, linguistic, religious, and national source: Mexico. Mexican immigration is concentrated heavily in the Southwest, particularly in the two largest and most economically and politically influential states—California and Texas. Hispanics, including Central and South Americans but predominantly Mexicans, today compose 28 percent of the population of Texas and about 31 percent of the population of California. More than a million Texans and more than three million Californians were born in Mexico. California alone holds nearly half of the Hispanic population, and well over half of the Mexican-origin population, of the entire country.

This Hispanization of the American Southwest is sometimes called the Reconquista, a poetic reminder that the territory in question was, after all, incorporated into the United States in the first place by force of arms, in the Mexican War of the 1840s. There is a certain charm in this turn of the wheel of history, with its reminder that in the long term the drama of armed conquest may be less consequential than the prosaic effects of human migration and birth rates and wage differentials. But the sobering fact is that the United States has had no experience comparable to what is now taking shape in the Southwest.

Mexican-Americans will have open to them possibilities closed to previous immigrant groups. They will have sufficient coherence and critical mass in a defined region so that, if they choose, they can preserve their distinctive culture indefinitely. They could also eventually undertake to do what no previous immigrant group could have dreamed of doing: challenge the existing cultural, political, legal, commercial, and educational systems to change fundamentally not only the language but also the very institutions in which they do business. They could even precipitate a debate over a “special relationship” with Mexico that would make the controversy over the North American Free Trade Agreement look like a college bull session. In the process, Americans could be pitched into a soul-searching redefinition of fundamental ideas such as the meaning of citizenship and national identity.

All prognostications about these possibilities are complicated by another circumstance that has no precedent in American immigration history: the region of Mexican immigrant settlement in the southwestern United States is con-

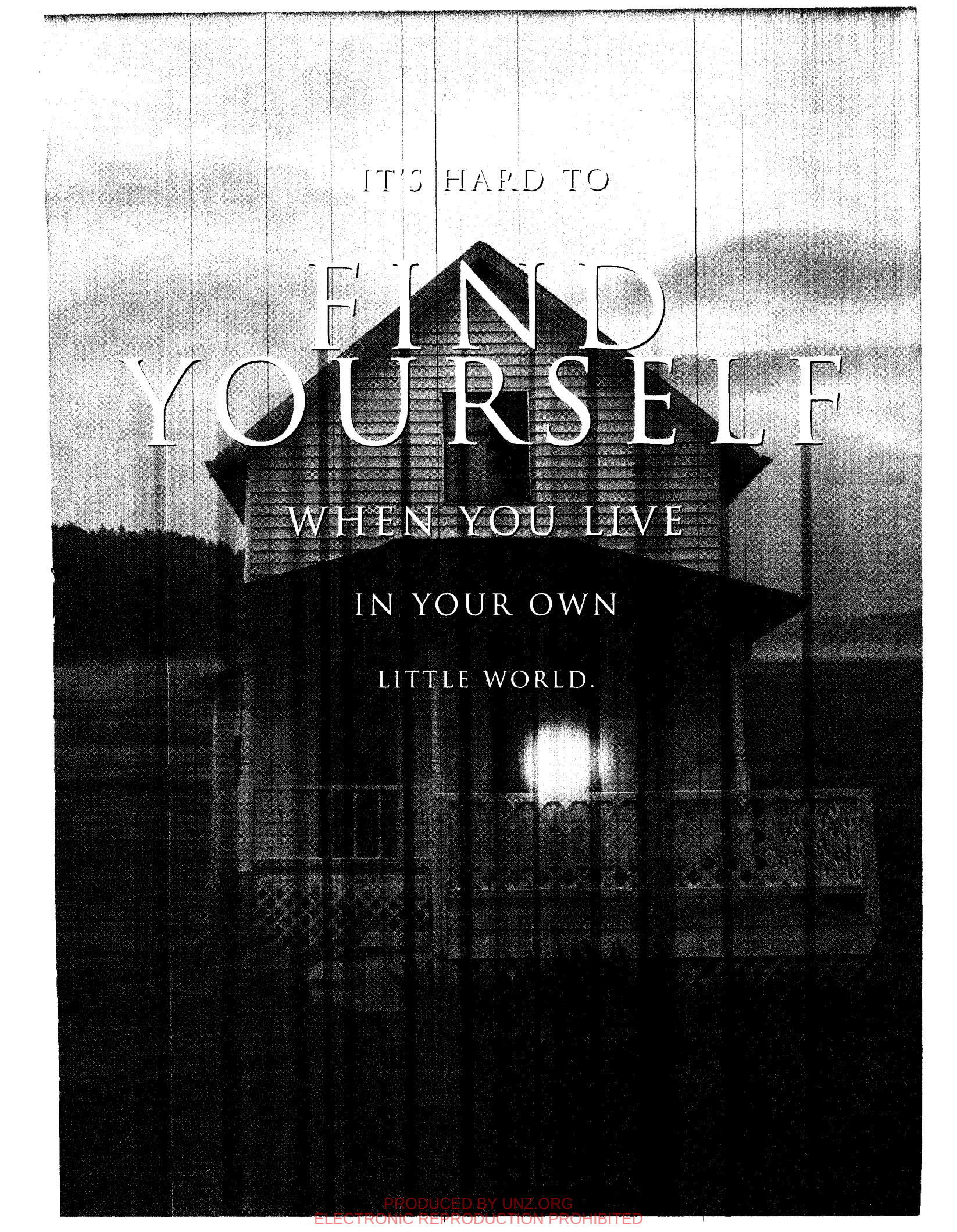
tiguous with Mexico itself. That proximity may continuously replenish the immigrant community, sustaining its distinctiveness and encouraging its assertiveness. Alternatively, the nearness of Mexico may weaken the community’s coherence and limit its political and cultural clout by chronically attenuating its members’ permanence in the United States, as the accessibility of the mother country makes for a kind of perpetual repatriation process.

In any case, there is no precedent in American history for these possibilities. No previous immigrant group had the size and concentration and easy access to its original culture that the Mexican immigrant group in the Southwest has today. If we seek historical guidance, the closest example we have to hand is in the diagonally opposite corner of the North American continent, in Quebec. The possibility looms that in the next generation or so we will see a kind of Chicano Quebec take shape in the American Southwest, as a group emerges with strong cultural cohesiveness and sufficient economic and political strength to insist on changes in the overall society’s ways of organizing itself and conducting its affairs.

Public debate over immigration has already registered this prospect, however faintly. How else to explain the drive in Congress, and in several states, to make English the “official” language for conducting civil business? In previous eras no such legislative muscle was thought necessary to expedite the process of immigrant acculturation, because alternatives to eventual acculturation were simply unimaginable. Less certain now that the traditional incentives are likely to do the work of assimilation, we seem bent on trying a *ukase*—a ham-handed and provocative device that may prove to be the opening chapter of a script for prolonged cultural warfare. Surely our goal should be to help our newest immigrants, those from Mexico especially, to become as well integrated in the larger American society as were those European “new” immigrants whom E. A. Ross scorned but whose children’s patriotism George Patton could take for granted. To reach that goal we will have to be not only more clever than our ancestors were but also less confrontational, more generous, and more welcoming than our current anxieties sometimes incline us to be.

The present may echo the past, but will not replicate it. Yet the fact that events have moved us into *terra nova et incognita* does not mean that history is useless as a way of coming to grips with our situation. To the contrary, the only way we can know with certainty as we move along time’s path that we have come to a genuinely new place is to know something of where we have been. “What’s new in the starry sky, dear Argelander?” Kaiser Wilhelm I is said to have asked his state astronomer, to which Argelander replied, “And does Your Majesty already know the old?” Knowing the old is the project of historical scholarship, and only that knowledge can reliably point us toward the new. As Lincoln also said, “As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.” ☛





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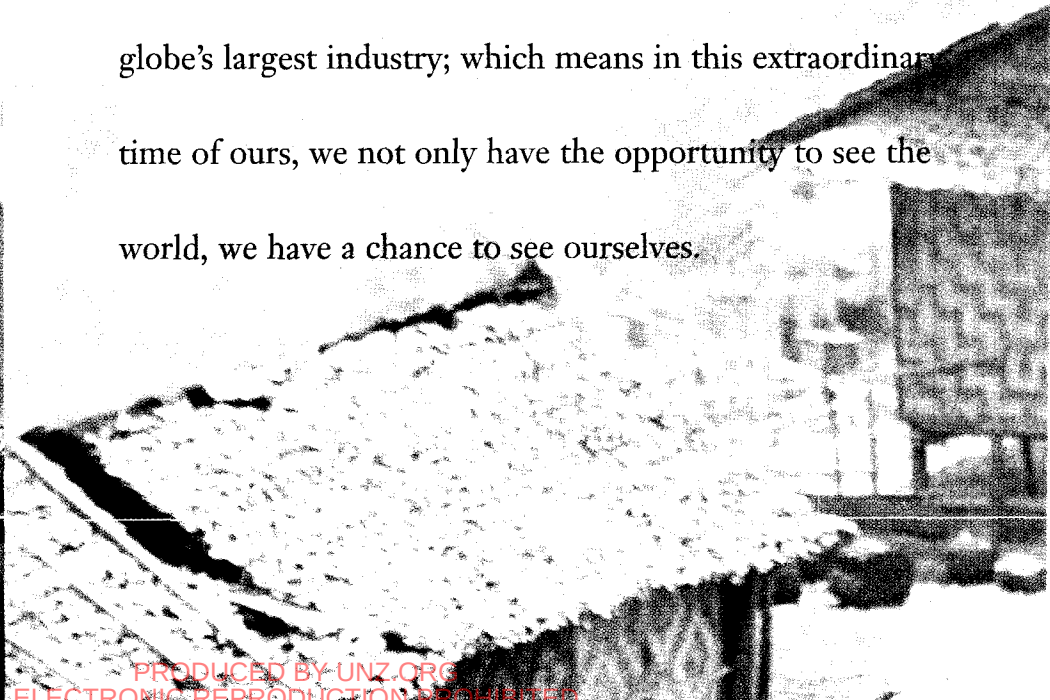
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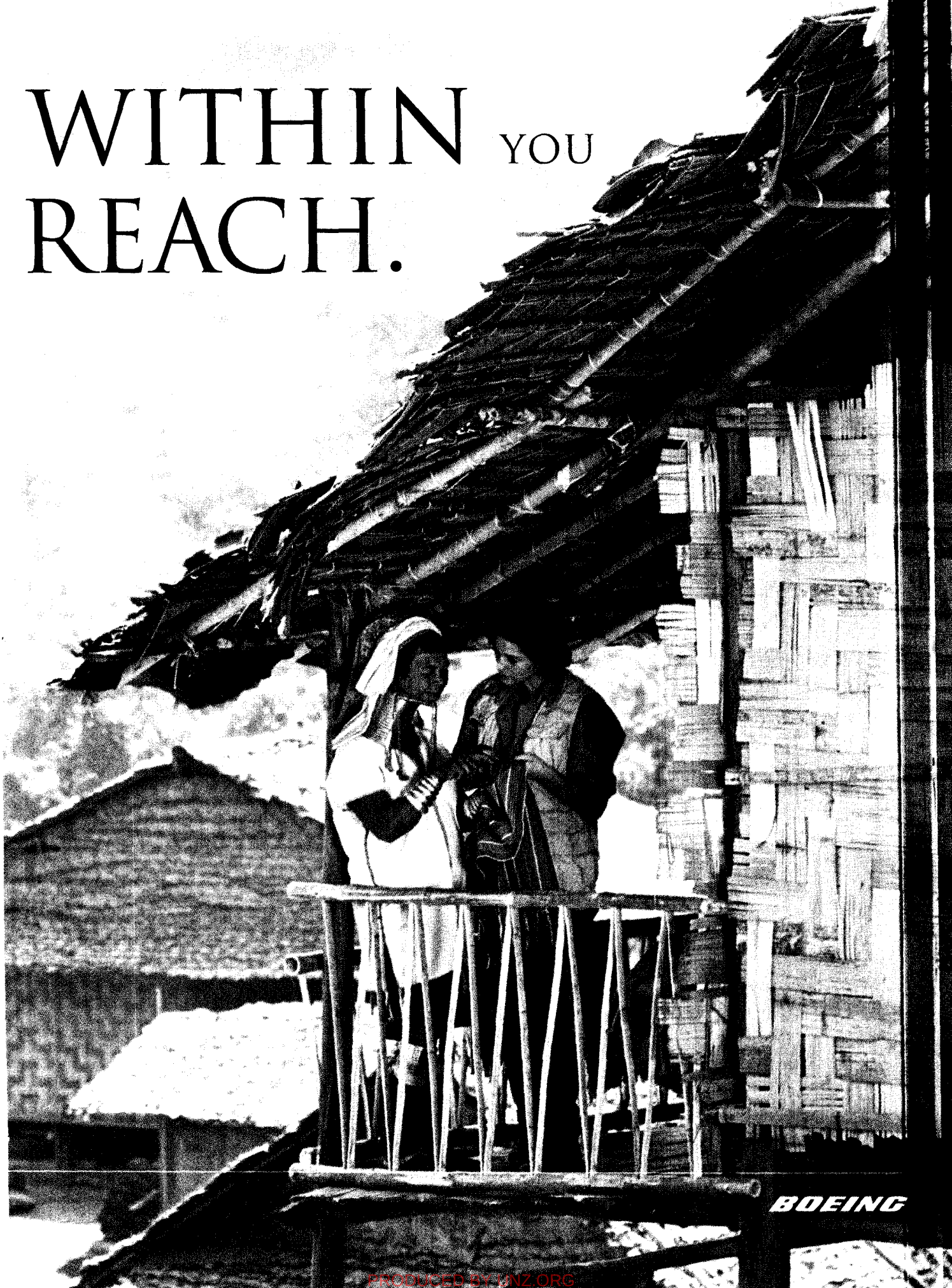
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# The New Economics of Immigration

*Affluent Americans gain;  
poor Americans lose*

**T** by **GEORGE J. BORJAS**

HE United States is on the verge of another great debate over immigration. Thus far the focus of this still-inchoate debate has been on illegal immigration or welfare benefits to legal immigrants, not on the larger issue of the character and consequences of the current high levels of legal immigration. Economic factors by themselves should not and will not decide the outcome of this debate. But they will play an important role. Economics helps us to frame answerable questions about immigration: Who gains by it? Who loses? And in light of the answers to these questions, what should U.S. immigration policy be?

There have been two major shifts in immigration policy in this century. In the twenties the United States began to limit the number of immigrants admitted and established the national-origins





quota system, an allocation scheme that awarded entry visas mainly on the basis of national origin and that favored Germany and the United Kingdom. This system was repealed in 1965, and family reunification became the central goal of immigration policy, with entry visas being awarded mainly to applicants who had relatives already residing in the United States.

The social, demographic, and economic changes initiated by the 1965 legislation have been truly historic. The number of immigrants began to rise rapidly. As recently as the 1950s only about 250,000 immigrants entered the country annually; by the 1990s the United States was admitting more than 800,000 legal immigrants a year, and some 300,000 aliens entered and stayed in the country illegally. The 1965 legislation also led to a momentous shift in the ethnic composition of the population. Although people of European origin dominated the immigrant flow from the country's founding until the 1950s, only about 10 percent of those admitted in the 1980s were of European origin. It is now estimated that non-Hispanic whites may form a minority of the population soon after 2050. More troubling is that immigration has been linked to the increase in income inequality observed since the 1980s, and to an increase in the costs of maintaining the programs that make up the welfare state.

These economic and demographic changes have fueled the incipient debate over immigration policy. For the most part, the weapons of choice in this debate are statistics produced by economic research, with all sides mar-



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shaling facts and evidence that support particular policy goals. In this essay I ask a simple question: What does economic research imply about the kind of immigration policy that the United States should pursue?

### A Formula for Admission

**E**VERY immigration policy must resolve two distinct issues: how many immigrants the country should admit, and what kinds of people they should be.

It is useful to view immigration policy as a formula that gives points to visa applicants on the basis of various characteristics and then sets a passing grade. The variables in the formula determine what kinds of people will be let into the country, and the passing grade determines how many will be let into the country. Current policy uses a formula that has one overriding variable: whether the visa applicant has a family member already residing in the United States. An applicant who has a relative in the country gets 100 points, passes the test, and is admitted. An applicant who does not gets 0 points, fails the test, and cannot immigrate legally.

Of course, this is a simplistic summary of current policy. There are a lot of bells and whistles in the immigration statutes (which are said to be only slightly less complex than the tax code). In fact the number of points a person gets may depend on whether the sponsor is a U.S. citizen or a permanent resident, and whether the family connection is a close one (such as a parent, a spouse, or a child) or a more distant one (a sibling). Such nuances help to determine the speed with which the visa is granted. A limited number of visas are given to refugees. Some are also distributed on the basis of skill characteristics, but these go to only seven percent of immigrants.

Although the United States does not officially admit to using a point system in awarding entry visas, other countries proudly display their formulas on the Internet. A comparison of these point systems reveals that the United States is exceptional in using essentially one variable. Canada, Australia, and New Zealand have more-complex formulas that include an applicant's educational background, occupation, English-language proficiency, and age along with family connections.

Sometimes a host country awards points to people who are willing to pay the visa's stated price. Canada, for example, has granted entry to virtually anyone who would invest at least \$250,000 in a Canadian business. Although this "visas-for-sale" policy is a favorite proposal of economists (if we have a market for butter, why not also a market for visas?), it is not taken very seriously in the political debate, perhaps because policymakers feel a repugnance against what may be perceived as a market for human beings. I will therefore discuss the implications of economic research only for policies in which points are awarded on the basis of socioeconomic characteristics, not exchanged for dollars.

### What Have We Learned?

**T**HE academic literature investigating the economic impact of immigration on the United States has grown rapidly in the past decade. The assumptions that long dominated discussion of the costs and benefits of immigration were replaced during the 1980s by a number of new questions, issues, and perceptions.

Consider the received wisdom of the early 1980s. The studies available suggested that even though immigrants arrived at an economic disadvantage, their opportunities improved rapidly over time. Within a decade or two of immigrants' arrival their earnings would overtake the earnings of natives of comparable socioeconomic background. The evidence also suggested that immigrants did no harm to native employment opportunities, and were less likely to receive welfare assistance than natives. Finally, the children of immigrants were even more successful than their parents. The empirical evidence, therefore, painted a very optimistic picture of the contribution that immigrants made to the American economy.

In the past ten years this picture has altered radically. New research has established a number of points.

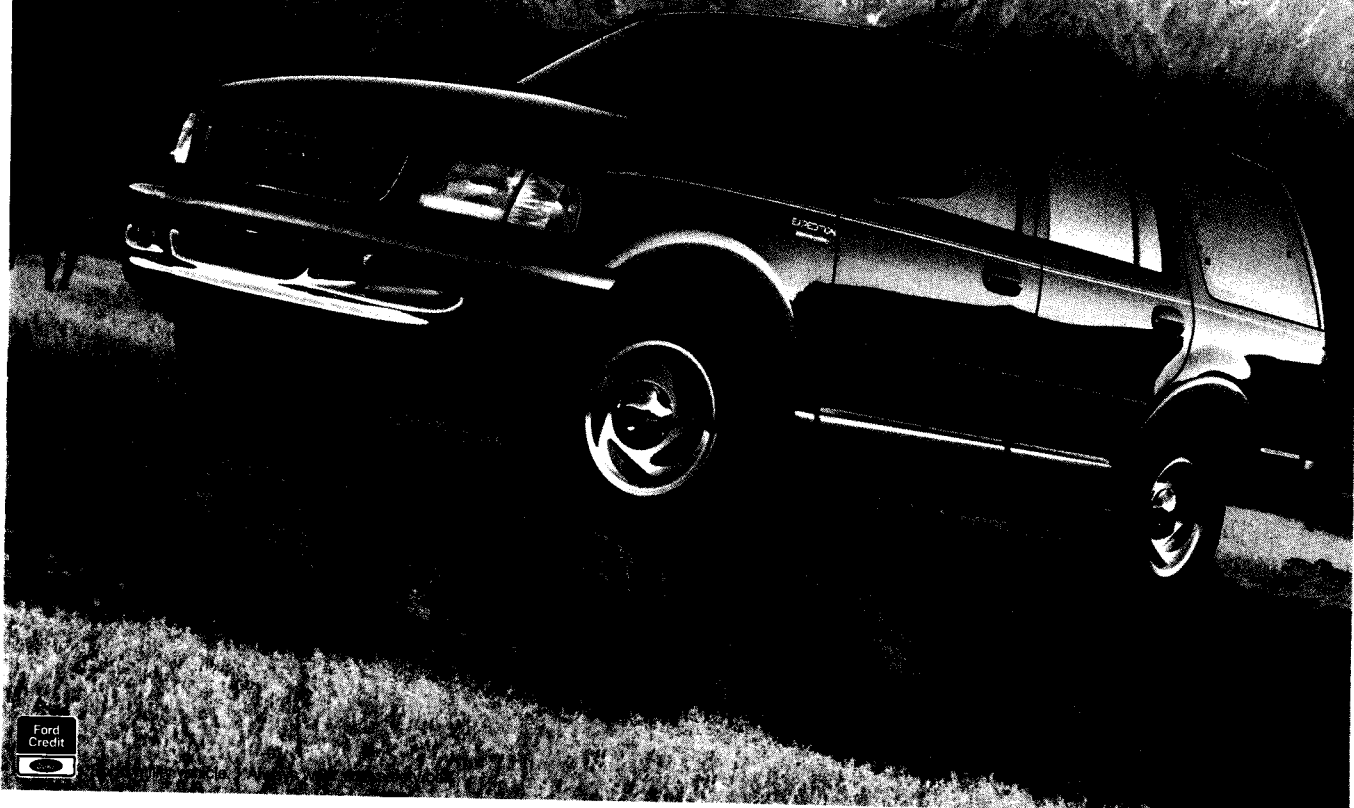
- The relative skills of successive immigrant waves have declined over much of the postwar period. In 1970, for example, the latest immigrant arrivals on average had 0.4 fewer years of schooling and earned 17 percent less than natives. By 1990 the most recently arrived immigrants had 1.3 fewer years of schooling and earned 32 percent less than natives.
- Because the newest immigrant waves start out at such an economic disadvantage, and because the rate of economic assimilation is not very rapid, the earnings of the newest arrivals may never reach parity with the earnings of natives. Recent arrivals will probably earn 20 percent less than natives throughout much of their working lives.
- The large-scale migration of less-skilled workers has done harm to the economic opportunities of less-skilled natives. Immigration may account for perhaps a third of the recent decline in the relative wages of less-educated native workers.
- The new immigrants are more likely to receive welfare assistance than earlier immigrants, and also more likely to do so than natives: 21 percent of immigrant households participate in some means-tested social-assistance program (such as cash benefits, Medicaid, or food stamps), as compared with 14 percent of native households.
- The increasing welfare dependency in the immigrant population suggests that immigration may create a substantial fiscal burden on the most-affected localities and states.
- There are economic benefits to be gained from immigration. These arise because certain skills that immigrants bring into the country complement those of the native population. However, these economic benefits are small—perhaps on the order of \$7 billion annually.
- There exists a strong correlation between the skills of im-



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migrants and the skills of their American-born children, so that the huge skill differentials observed among today's foreign-born groups will almost certainly become tomorrow's differences among American-born ethnic groups. In effect, immigration has set the stage for sizable ethnic differences in skills and socioeconomic outcomes, which are sure to be the focus of intense attention in the next century.

The United States is only beginning to observe the economic consequences of the historic changes in the numbers, national origins, and skills of immigrants admitted over the past three decades. Regardless of how immigration policy changes in the near future, we have already set in motion circumstances that will surely alter the economic prospects of native workers and the costs of social-insurance programs not only in our generation but for our children and grandchildren as well.

### **Whose Interests Will We Serve?**

**I**F economic research is to play a productive role in the immigration debate, research findings should help us to devise the formula that determines admission into the United States. We need to decide what variables are to be used to award points to applicants, and what is to be the passing grade. Before we can resolve these issues, however, we have to address a difficult philosophical question: What should the United States try to accomplish with its immigration policy?

The answer to this question is far from obvious, even when the question is posed in purely economic terms. We can think of the world as composed of three distinct groups: people born in the United States (natives), immigrants, and people who remain in other countries. Whose economic welfare should the United States try to improve when setting policy—that of natives, of immigrants, of the rest of the world, or of some combination of the three? The formula implied by economic research depends on whose interests the United States cares most about.

Different political, economic, and moral arguments can be made in favor of each of the three groups. I think that most participants in the U.S. policy debate attach the greatest (and perhaps the only) weight to the well-being of natives. This is not surprising. Natives dominate the market for political ideas in the United States, and most proposals for immigration reform will unavoidably reflect the self-interest and concerns of native voters.

Immigration almost always improves the well-being of the immigrants. If they don't find themselves better off after they enter the United States, they are free to go back or to try their luck elsewhere—and, indeed, some do. A few observers attach great weight to the fact that many of the "huddled masses" now live in relative comfort.

As for the vast populations that remain in the source

countries, they are affected by U.S. immigration policy in a number of ways. Most directly, the policy choices made by the United States may drain particular skills and abilities from the labor markets of source countries. A brain drain slows economic growth in the source countries, as the entrepreneurs and skilled workers who are most likely to spur growth move to greener pastures. Similarly, the principles of free trade suggest that world output would be largest if there were no national borders to interfere with the free movement of people. A policy that restricts workers from moving across borders unavoidably leads to a smaller world economy, to the detriment of many source countries.

The three groups may therefore have conflicting interests, and economics cannot tell us whose interests matter most. The weight that we attach to each of the three groups depends on our values and ideology. For the sake of argument I will assume a political consensus that the objective of immigration policy is to improve the economic well-being of the native population.

Beyond that, we have to specify which dimension of native economic well-being we care most about: per capita income or distribution of income. As we shall see, immigration raises per capita income in the native population, but this does not mean that all natives gain equally. In fact some natives are likely to see their incomes greatly reduced. We must therefore be able to judge an immigration policy in terms of its impact on two different economic dimensions: the size of the economic pie (which economists call "efficiency") and how the pie is sliced ("distribution"). The relative weights that we attach to efficiency and distribution again depend on our values and ideology, and economics provides no guidance on how to rank the two.

For the most part, economists take a very narrow approach: policies that increase the size of the pie are typically considered to be better policies, regardless of their impact on the distribution of wealth in society. We shall begin our construction of an immigration policy by taking this narrow approach. In other words, let's assume that immigration policy has a single and well-defined purpose: to maximize the size of the economic pie available to the native population of the United States. We shall return to the distributional issues raised by immigration policy later on.

### **The Economic Case for Immigration**

**T**O see how natives gain from immigration, let's first think about how the United States gains from foreign trade. When we import toys made by cheap Chinese labor, workers in the American toy industry undoubtedly suffer wage cuts and perhaps even lose their jobs. These losses, however, are more than offset by the benefits accruing to consumers, who enjoy the lower prices induced by addition-

al competition. An important lesson from this exercise, worth remembering when we look at the gains from immigration, is that for there to be gains from foreign trade for the economy as a whole, some sectors of the economy must lose.

Consider the analogous argument for immigration. Immigrants increase the number of workers in the economy. Because they create additional competition in the labor market, the wages of native workers fall. At the same time, however, native-owned firms gain, because they can hire workers at lower wages; and many native consumers gain because lower labor costs lead to cheaper goods and services. The gains accruing to those who consume immigrants' services exceed the losses suffered by native workers, and hence society as a whole is better off.

Immigration therefore has two distinct consequences. The size of the economic pie increases. And a redistribution of income is induced, from native workers who compete with immigrant labor to those who use immigrants' services.

The standard economic model of the labor market suggests that the net gain from immigration is small. The Unit-

migration, concludes that a 10 percent increase in the number of workers lowers wages by about three percent.

If we accept this finding, we can argue as follows: We know that about 70 percent of GDP accrues to workers (with the rest going to the owners of companies), and that natives make up slightly more than 90 percent of the population. Therefore, native workers take home about 63 percent of GDP in the form of wages and salaries. If the 10 percent increase in the number of workers due to immigration has lowered wages by three percent, the share of GDP accruing to native workers has fallen by 1.9 percentage points (or  $0.63 \times 0.03$ ). Thus my conclusion that in a \$7 trillion economy native earnings drop by \$133 billion.

Those lost earnings do not vanish into thin air. They represent an income transfer from workers to users of immigrants' services—the employers of immigrants and the consumers who buy the goods and services produced by immigrants. These winners get to pocket the \$133 billion—and then some, because the goods produced by immigrant workers generate additional profits for employers. Under the



**T**he debate over immigration policy is not over whether the entire country is made better off by immigration—it is over how the economic pie is sliced up.

ed States now has more than 20 million foreign-born residents, making up slightly less than 10 percent of the population. I have estimated that native workers lose about \$133 billion a year as a result of this immigration (or 1.9 percent of the gross domestic product in a \$7 trillion economy), mainly because immigrants drive down wages. However, employers—from the owners of large agricultural enterprises to people who hire household help—gain on the order of \$140 billion (or 2.0 percent of GDP). The net gain, which I call the immigration surplus, is only about \$7 billion. Thus the increase in the per capita income of natives is small—less than \$30 a year. But the small size of this increase masks a substantial redistribution of wealth.

My calculation used the textbook model of a competitive labor market: wages and employment are determined in a free market that balances the desires of people looking for work with the needs of firms looking for workers. In this framework an increase in the number of workers reduces wages in the economy—immigrants join natives in the competition for jobs and bid down wages in the process. There is a lot of disagreement over how much native wages fall when immigrants enter the labor market. Nevertheless, a great deal of empirical research in economics, often unrelated to the question of im-

assumption that a 10 percent increase in the number of workers reduces wages by three percent, it turns out that the winners get a windfall totaling \$140 billion. Hence the \$7 billion immigration surplus.

We can quibble about assumptions, but the rigor of economic theory suggests that this nitpicking may not alter our conclusions much. For example, one could argue—and many do—that immigrants do not reduce the earnings of native workers. If we wished to believe this, however, we would also be forced to conclude that natives do not benefit from immigration at all. If wages do not fall, there are no savings in employers' payrolls and no cost savings to be passed on to native consumers. Remember the lesson from the foreign-trade example: no pain, no gain.

One could also argue that immigration has reduced the earnings of natives very substantially—by, say, 10 percent. The immigration surplus would then be about \$25 billion annually. The net gain from immigration, therefore, remains small even with an unrealistically high estimate of the impact of immigration on native earnings. Imagine what U.S. policy would look like today if our earnings had fallen by 10 percent as a result of past immigration.

The immigration surplus has to be balanced against the

cost of providing services to the immigrant population. Immigrants have high rates of welfare reciprocity. Estimates of the fiscal impact of immigration (that is, of the difference between the taxes paid by immigrants and the cost of services provided to them) vary widely. Some studies claim that immigrants pay \$25–\$30 billion more in taxes than they take out of the system, while other studies blame them for a fiscal burden of more than \$40 billion on natives.

It is doubtful that either of these statistics accurately reflects the gap between taxes paid and the cost of services provided. Studies that claim a beneficial fiscal impact tend to assume that immigrants do not increase the cost of most government programs other than education and welfare. Even though we do not know by how much immigrants increase the cost of police

protection, maintaining roads and national parks, and so forth, we do know that it costs more to provide these services to an ever larger population. However, studies that claim a large fiscal burden often overstate the costs of immigration and understate the taxes paid. As a result, estimates of the fiscal impact of immigration should be viewed with suspicion. Nevertheless, because the immigration surplus is around \$7 billion, the net benefit from immigration after accounting for the fiscal impact is very small, and could conceivably be a net loss.

## How Many and Whom Should We Admit?

**I**N principle, we should admit immigrants whenever their economic contribution (to native well-being) will exceed the costs of providing social services to them. We are not, though, in a position to make this calculation with any reasonable degree of confidence. In fact, no mainstream study has ever attempted to suggest, purely on the basis of the empirical evidence, how many immigrants should be admitted.

This unfortunate lack of guidance from economic research has, I believe, led to sudden and remarkable swings in policy proposals. As recently as 1990 Congress legislated an increase in the number of legal immigrants of about 175,000 people annually. Last year the Commission on Immigration Reform, headed by Barbara Jordan, recommended that legal immigration be cut by about 240,000 people a year—a proposal that was immediately supported by President Clinton. (The Clinton Administration, however, successfully resisted congressional efforts to follow up on the commission's recommendations.)

Although we do not know how many immigrants to admit, simple economics and common sense suggest that the magic number should not be an immutable constant regardless of economic conditions in the United States. A good case can be made for linking immigration to the business cycle: admit more immigrants when the economy is strong and the unemployment rate is low, and cut back on immigration when the economy is weak and the unemployment rate is high.

Economic research also suggests that the United States may be better off if its policy of awarding entry visas favors skilled workers. Skilled immigrants earn more than less-skilled immigrants, and hence pay more in taxes, and they are less likely to use welfare and other social services.

Depending on how the skills of immigrants compare with the skills of natives, immigrants also affect the productivity of the native work force and of native-owned companies. Skilled native workers, for example, have much to gain when less-skilled workers enter the United States: they can devote all their efforts to jobs that use their skills effectively while immigrants provide cheap labor for service jobs. These gains, however, come at a cost. The jobs of less-skilled natives are now at risk, and these natives will suffer a reduction in their earnings. Nonetheless, it does not seem far-fetched to assume

## JUNIOR SOCCER

You'd think the ball was a germ, the kids  
exuberant antibodies swarming  
to douse it with will, then finally  
punish it toward the orange witch-hats goal.

My friend's daughter doesn't want us to know  
she's eager for us to watch her jostle  
her little body into the skirmish.  
Her hair's an antenna for attention,

but she never turns, having learned to hide  
childish reliance on Mom's esteem.  
She still can't grasp the rationale of rules  
or which of the brawling feet are on her team.

One boy, the coach's son, head-butts  
the ball above a small astonished melee  
of teammates contending with each other,  
the younger kids intent on getting only

some piece of themselves to touch it,  
like tongues waiting to catch the first raindrop,  
the older ones more focused, their faces  
braced: balanced surfaces of water.

The small girl who invited me here floats  
to the sidelines, absentmindedly alone,  
staring into the trees behind the school,  
before she remembers again we're watching.

—ANDREW FRISARDI



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that the American work force, particularly in comparison with the work forces of many source countries, is composed primarily of skilled workers. Thus the typical American worker would seem to gain from unskilled immigration.

How does immigration affect companies' profits? Companies that use less-skilled workers on the production line gain from the immigration of the less-skilled, who reduce the earnings of less-skilled workers in favor of increasing profits. However, other companies—perhaps even most—might be better off with skilled immigrants. Many studies in economics suggest that skilled labor is better suited to the machines that are now used widely in the production process. Most companies would therefore gain more if the immigrant flow were composed of skilled workers.

Most workers prefer unskilled immigrants, whereas most companies prefer skilled immigrants. This conflict can be resolved only by measuring how much native workers gain from unskilled immigration and how much companies gain from skilled immigration, and comparing the two. Although there is a lot of uncertainty in the academic literature, we do know that the productivity of capital is very responsive to an influx of skilled workers. The large increase in the profits of the typical company, and the corresponding reduction in the cost of goods produced by skilled workers, suggest that the United States might be better off with a policy favoring skilled immigrants.

The gains from skilled immigration will be even larger if immigrants have "external effects" on the productivity of natives. One could argue, for example, that immigrants may bring knowledge, skills, and abilities that natives lack, and that natives might somehow pick up this know-how by interacting with immigrants. It seems reasonable to suspect that the value of these external effects would be greater if natives interact with highly skilled immigrants. This increase in the human capital of natives might offset—and perhaps even reverse—the harm that immigration does to the wages of competing workers.

Although such effects now play a popular role in economic theory, there is little empirical evidence supporting their existence, let alone measuring their magnitude. I find it difficult to imagine that interaction with immigrants entering an economy as large as that of the United States could have a measurable effect. Nevertheless, if external effects exist, they reinforce the argument that the United States would gain most from skilled immigrants.

### Efficiency Versus Distribution

**P**ARTICIPANTS in the immigration debate routinely use the results of economic research to frame the discussion and to suggest policy solutions. Perhaps the most important contributions of this research are the insights that immigration entails both gains and losses for the native

population, that the winners and the losers are typically different groups, and that policy parameters can be set in ways that attempt to maximize gains and minimize losses. If the objective of immigration policy is to increase the per capita income of the native population, the evidence suggests that immigration policy should encourage the entry of skilled workers. It is important to remember, however, that even though the immigration of skilled workers would be beneficial for the United States as a whole, the gains and losses would be concentrated in particular subgroups of the population.

As we have seen, the net gains from current immigration are small, so it is unlikely that these gains can play a crucial role in the policy debate. Economic research teaches a very valuable lesson: the economic impact of immigration is essentially distributional. Current immigration redistributes wealth from unskilled workers, whose wages are lowered by immigrants, to skilled workers and owners of companies that buy immigrants' services, and from taxpayers who bear the burden of paying for the social services used by immigrants to consumers who use the goods and services produced by immigrants.

Distributional issues drive the political debate over many social policies, and immigration policy is no exception. The debate over immigration policy is not a debate over whether the entire country is made better off by immigration—the gains from immigration seem much too small, and could even be outweighed by the costs of providing increased social services. Immigration changes how the economic pie is sliced up—and this fact goes a long way toward explaining why the debate over how many and what kinds of immigrants to admit is best viewed as a tug-of-war between those who gain from immigration and those who lose from it.

History has taught us that immigration policy changes rarely, but when it does, it changes drastically. Can economic research play a role in finding a better policy? I believe it can, but there are dangers ahead. Although the pendulum seems to be swinging to the restrictionist side (with ever louder calls for a complete closing of our borders), a greater danger to the national interest may be the few economic groups that gain much from immigration. They seem indifferent to the costs that immigration imposes on other segments of society, and they have considerable financial incentives to keep the current policy in place. The harmful effects of immigration will not go away simply because some people do not wish to see them. In the short run these groups may simply delay the day of reckoning. Their potential long-run impact, however, is much more perilous: the longer the delay, the greater the chances that when immigration policy finally changes, it will undergo a seismic shift—one that, as in the twenties, may come close to shutting down the border and preventing Americans from enjoying the benefits that a well-designed immigration policy can bestow on the United States. ☞

# Horse Heaven Hills

by CHRISTINA ADAM



**I** WAS driving my aunt's sun-faded tank of a Volvo through the dry sagebrush and deep ravines of eastern Washington when out of nowhere she announced, "We just passed the Horse Heaven Hills." Instantly I pictured a sloping hillside of tall grasses where a band of horses grazed, their long tails swishing side to side—a place all horses would escape to if they could.

"Really?" I said, full of curiosity.

"No," she said. "I lied."

My matron aunt didn't lie. We laughed so hard she couldn't finish for a while. "We passed them some time back," she said, "but we were talking, and I couldn't stop. I knew you'd like that name, so I just threw it in, a little late."

My pear-shaped, sharp-eyed aunt—the liar—and I were driving back to North Dakota. She had been telling me about the winters there—so severe that a farmer could be lost between the house and the barn. She was my father's younger sister, but he had left home at fifteen to join the Civilian Conservation Corps, and she was the one who kept the family history.

She had been widowed for many years, and I was single; both of us were schoolteachers. Because my parents had divorced when I was young, this was the only chance I'd ever

had to see where my father had been raised. I was raised in cities, but even as a small child I had loved all zoos and farms and open country. Though both my North Dakota grandparents had died by then, to me this first trip felt like a return.

At dusk we stopped in Miles City, Montana, and tried to find the center of town, but we kept passing the same railroad tracks and cattle yards. We settled for the one motel we saw, and all evening we kept making jokes about how we might decide to get dressed up and "do" the town—if we could *find* it.

The next day, in North Dakota, south of Minot, my aunt drove us through small, nearly abandoned towns and out into the farm country where she and my dad had lived as children. Thick black-green trees followed the dusty roads, and more than once we caught sight of deer gliding in the shadows.

"I don't remember deer," my aunt told me. "I don't think the windbreak trees were big enough to shelter deer back then."

Where I had expected miles of flat and empty prairie, the land rolled away in riffling swales of deep green wheat, fields of golden sunflowers, and pools of pale blue flax. Most of the homestead farms had been sold, consumed by vast wheat operations; the houses were moved, torn down, or burned.

What made her go on? Another woman would stay in the house, would chop wood and wait, would make do until the storm had passed



When we passed a certain farm, a two-story white house with no front porch or adornment, she said, "That's where cousin Margarete lived. She lived there by herself and farmed."

**M**ARGARETE'S kitchen smelled of flour and yeast and scalded milk, the milk smell like burned sugar. The baby, sleeping in a basket on a chair, had the round, tight plumpness of bread rising in a bowl. Wind shrieked under the eaves.

Margarete had come to dread the wind. She heard it as she lay in bed at night, the incessant rush of yards and yards of silk drawn through a knothole. She felt the whole house shudder in the wind, a house anchored to rock and built of thick-sawn wooden planks and plaster.

A blizzard had blown up in the night, and when she awakened, sheets of thin ice glistened on the inside of the windowpanes. Her husband rose from bed, a dim shadow at the outskirts of her dream. He let her sleep while he went down to light the stove and heat the kitchen for her and the baby.

Friedrich was always gone out to his chores before she came downstairs. As she worked in the kitchen, kneading bread, she longed for him to come back. On winter mornings he followed a stout rope strung from the house to the barn, where he fed his stock and milked. He would return hot, sweating under woolen shirts, his cheeks red and his beard tinkling with ice. His coveralls came off in a shower of snow and wet hay chaff.

Theirs was not a common marriage. Each had parents who had sailed from German colonies in Russia. Friedrich had farmed for his father and had not married until late in life. When he did marry, he chose a woman no one thought of as a bride. Margarete was tall and large-boned, her broad figure shaped like two whisk brooms set stump to stump upon each other. She wore long dresses and linen aprons washed to the softness of thick pressed paper. With her knuckled feet in stout leather boots and her dark hair drawn back in a bun, she stood like a monolith. Even in the brief high color of her youth, children had run from her.

Margarete had been born into a strict patriarchal family, where her father dominated everyone. She had been the oldest of nine living children. In her new family, in her own house, in her own kitchen, she seldom smiled, but contentment surprised her, rising in her body like warm water.

That morning she went about assembling breakfast: sweet kuchen and pale sausages, pickled watermelon rind and golden jellies from the cellar, strong-tasting butter she had churned herself, and cheese. She fed the baby, heated water, and bathed the small girl in a basin.

She did not know when to expect her husband. After he milked the cow each day, small emergencies arose—the cow had kicked down a board in her stall; mice had gnawed

through harness; one of the oxen had rubbed its hind leg raw. Sometimes he needed her to help, and she awoke to an urgency that drew her without complaint into the black, frozen morning.

The wind rose like an inhalation, sucking at the doors. The sheets of blue ice shrank away from the windows, but snowdrifts covered all the lower panes. Above, snow drove past in horizontal lines. She could not see the barn at all, and the wind tormented her, like an alarm she couldn't answer, or a kettle screaming on the stove, or a window banging in the night.

Just before noon she began to feel angry. Disappointment dropped inside her, a falling of her spirits and her hopes. She had arranged the table for breakfast in her yellow-and-white kitchen, the floor scrubbed and shining, the bread baked and cooling on the stove. The baby had begun to fuss and wince in her sleep, as if in her dreams she'd tasted bitter food.

Margarete pulled on a second pair of woolen stockings and strapped the baby to her chest with a shawl crossed in front of her and tied behind. Over this she buttoned a heavy coat, and she wrapped a knitted scarf around her head.

At first she couldn't force the door. The wind had sucked it closed in a tight seal. She shouldered it open and grasped the back-porch post, feeling up and down its length for the guide rope. When she had it in her gloves, she yanked on it with all her strength. It was so weighted with snow and ice that it hung as if anchored in the sea. It scarcely gave at all.

She hesitated. To go was to disappear into the snow and wind. She thought she should take the baby back—leave her in the basket, safe. But if Friedrich was hurt, she'd want the baby with her. In a few more hours the snow would be too deep for her to return to the house. She wasn't sure she could go on without the small weight of the child resting on her chest.

She took a step into the snow and sank up to her thighs. Hauling on the rope, she took another step. Already the heat of her breath steamed her cheeks and fogged her vision. She was deaf and blind. When she stopped to listen, tears formed in her eyes and froze along her cheeks.

But she was a large woman, and strong. She forced another step, and another. The track behind her vanished under drifting snow. What made her go on? Another woman would stay in the house, would chop wood and wait, would make do until the storm had passed, and then find her husband in the barn, stranded there but safe.

But Friedrich had chosen Margarete because he saw in her strength. He loved her for her size, her very bulk. In their bed at night he could balance his entire narrow body on her body while she held him in her arms. She would have liked to have been born small and delicate, willowy and thin; she would like to be the soft, protected one. But his love was a physical truth to her—almost a location. She took comfort in it; she was unafraid.

She fought on toward the barn. The baby, as if she meant to rejoin her mother's body, lay silent, burrowing. Margarete





stopped to make sure the baby had air to breathe and then went on, following the rope.

When it disappeared under the snow, she sank down to her knees and forced her hands to grip. She stood and set her bones against the pull. She pulled beyond her strength until the rope began to creak and give. Slowly she drew from the snow the frayed end of the line, encased in a rock

of ice. It no longer reached the barn. The frozen rope hurt her hands, but she could not let it drop. She subsided in the snow, her wet skirts frozen now, and rising up around her like a black umbrella.

Fear made the blood throb in her face and neck. Fear shimmered in her veins, and she seemed able to see and feel and hear more. Her thoughts ran fast. In her mind she traced





the way back and the way ahead. But the fear was like a paralyzing drug. It turned her limbs to bags of grain. If she went ahead without the rope, she would never find her way back to the house.

She heard the voice of her papa, commanding her to work harder, to stay indoors and not show herself. She heard him pray, and order all books out of the house.

The wind died down, and for a moment she thought she could see the barn. Then she could hear one broken cry—the cow. She stood and took a step forward, and then another step. The friction of the wind had iced the snow into a solid crust. She stumbled forward, as if rushing past a dark and frightening place at night. As if speed would bring the danger sooner, and it would be over with.

Her shoulder collided with the barn, and she bounced back into the snow, protecting the baby with her body. When she could rise, she felt along the siding of the barn until she found the doorway, frozen shut.

When she couldn't push it open, she cried in frustration. To come so far. She banged on the door and heard the cow inside. She gripped the edge of the sliding door and shoved it in and out until the ice began to crack. She pried it open just enough to twist in sideways.

She called out for Friedrich in the dark. The barn felt no warmer than outside, but away from the wind her face began to thaw and burn. Her eyes adjusted to the shadows. She could feel the baby's heartbeat and a damp breath wetting her blouse. The milk cow shuffled, nervous in her stall, and at the far end of the barn Margarete saw the bulk of the two oxen, tethered side by side.

She searched each stall and corner, calling. Friedrich might have been kicked, or might have fallen from the loft. She climbed up the narrow wooden stairs, tripping on her frozen skirts. When she realized that Friedrich was not in the hayloft, she sank to her knees in the straw, stunned almost beyond thought.

Such events were not unknown. In this place men were hurt and died. They rolled under wagons or were kicked by horses. They drowned in swiftly rising waters or fell through thinning ice. Two years before, a snowstorm had come with no warning, so fast that there was no time to herd the stock to safety. The wind drove the snow so thick that cattle suffocated in the fields. When the sky cleared, farmers shoveled out their cows and calves—still standing, frozen stiff.

If Friedrich had lost his way out in the wind, she did not know how to find him. If the wind subsided, if the snow stopped, she could go out with the pitchfork and probe with its wooden handle. Even if the storm died down just a little, she would go out, keeping one hand on the barn, and call.

She realized the cow was bellowing in pain, its teats swollen with milk. Friedrich had never reached the barn. Margarete found a dirty bucket and wiped it out with straw. She drew up the stool and milked the cow, her cheek against the cow's taut hide.

She survived out in the barn for two weeks and a day. She had no fire, no way to melt the snow for water. The oxen fed on snow, but in the cold and darkness the cow began to fail.

Margarete and the child kept from freezing by sleeping with the cow. Margarete threw down hay and straw, and made a deep nest in the stall, and when the milk cow bedded down, she slept against its flank. In the night she dreamed the cow was Friedrich, his strong, smooth back against her back in sleep. She dreamed the baby suckling was her husband, searching for his life.

With her shoulder aching, Margarete gathered snow and urged the cow to swallow, but each day the animal grew weaker and finally refused to eat at all. When it went dry,

Margarete found an awl and pierced its throat. She tried to catch the blood in the milk bucket, but the cow, betrayed, flung its head from side to side and lived just long enough to make the stall look like a slaughterhouse.

Margarete drank what blood she caught to make milk for the child, but the child cried until the only sound that came from her was a small, dry barking. Without the cow they could not stop shivering. The oxen were too young and wild, too unpredictable, to go near. But after two weeks in the cold Margarete had no choice. She laid the baby in the straw and yoked and harnessed the oxen. Her hands bled working with the stiff and frozen traces.

When she thought morning had come, when the dark seemed luminous, she strapped the baby to her breast again and led the oxen to the door. Even after she managed to work the door open, the oxen balked at going out. A low wall of glistening ice had formed against the barn. Beyond it Margarete saw only looming drifts and swirling snow.

Day after day in autumn the oxen hauled wagons of threshed grain to the mill. The mill and granaries stood at the railroad siding at the edge of town. Margarete thought, If I let them go, they will take us to the mill.

And so she stumbled behind the oxen. They broke a trail with their broad chests and twice-shod cloven hooves. They lowered their huge horns and pushed ahead.

Margarete did not know where they were going. She walked on, her head down, following the track. No one knows how long she walked. When the men found her, the oxen had stopped at the loading docks, just as if they'd brought a load of grain, and had pawed down to dry grass. Margarete was found curled up in the snow like a child napping in a closet or a secret place, her clothes and face stained dark with blood. She slept there so deeply they thought at first that she was dead. Friedrich was found later, not three feet from the barn.

**T**HE last time I saw Margarete," my aunt said, "was at Uncle Frank's funeral. She came in an old house-dress, buttoned down the front. It drooped around her ankles, and I remember she had on men's work boots with no socks, and her hands hung almost to her knees."

When we drove again past Margarete's house, far away from any other farm, my aunt told me, "When I was a girl, we always wondered about that place. We believed she slept out in the barn with the farm animals. But now I'm not sure anybody knew that for a fact. She lived out there alone and farmed. Never wanted help or asked for any."

"How do you know so much about her, then?"

My aunt paused, giving me a "Just hold on" look. "During the Depression she fed my mother and your dad and me. Brought us produce from the farm. Chickens and sausage and ham. I remember strawberries. I've never tasted sweet-

ness like that again. And striped green watermelons, so ripe they split open on their own. She brought food to other widows, but my mother was her only friend.

"In 1934, when your grandfather died, she came and sat with Mother. Sometime in the night she told her the whole story."

"What happened to the baby?" That's all I wanted to know. "Did the baby live?"

"I think so," my aunt said. "But I don't know for sure. I can't remember."

"Isn't there somebody you can ask?"

My aunt gave me a sideways look, as if I had a lot to learn, and said, "There might be, somewhere. But I don't know. Most of our relatives are gone, and nobody really knew Margarete. She kept to herself."

My aunt was quiet for a while.

"I have a letter someplace," she told me. "When I get home, I'll look for it."

Later that summer the letter came. Along with more of Margarete's story.

**D**URING the weeks in the barn, when keeping herself and the child alive was a flame she kindled and guarded, a small fire she could not let go out, Margarete had with her a letter. According to my aunt, she kept it with her always. When a thinning of dark told her it was day, she unfolded the letter from her pocket and read it aloud. Though the script was dim and in German, she knew it by heart.

It was a letter Friedrich had given her the night they were married, a very old letter even then. It had been written by his grandfather to his father, who had sailed from Russia in dark days. His father and his mother, a young woman with a coronet of braids, had homesteaded this farm and built the first house out of sod. Margarete held the thin paper close to her eyes and read.

*12 of July, Neudorf*

*Dear children,*

*We greet all of you warmly with the kiss of love. We are, thank God, still all well. We wish this for you too with all our hearts. I received your letter and see that you made the big trip happily and in good health. We were overjoyed to receive your letter since we waited with longing for it. It was too short. We would have liked to know more. Mother asked, after I read and became still, if that was all, and I had to say that it was. We wanted to know more, wanted to know what would happen with you in the future.*

*Dear children, I cannot write much happy news. You know the past, and the future lies forebodingly before us. God has hit us immediately and hard. I cannot express it. The hay harvest came to naught, we could not cut the grass, and the corn is such that much of it cannot be used. Wheat and oats are the same. They have few grains. We still have some hope for the potatoes and corn. But it is*

*hard to survive, no bread and no seed. If only this was all that was missing, it would be all right, but there is no fodder for the animals, who will have to starve. If you try to sell a cow or a horse, no one wants it. This is the situation all around. Dear children, I am sorry I have to write like this but the need is greater even than I have described it.*

*Dear children, please write us again how you are. We are very concerned about you. May God protect you and keep you from all harm that could befall you in that world. With our coming it is not good. The trip costs a lot. You found that out. We send heartfelt greeting to both of you, kiss you, and remain your loving parents, brothers, and sisters in Russia. Write immediately again. We wait anxiously.*

Margarete folded the letter and placed it inside her clothing, where it felt like warmth. The words in German were so sweet, and these people, who endured so much in Russia, were so innocent with love. She thought, I will hold this letter close, and it will keep me. We will make a home in this country, where there will always be enough to eat, and our children will travel from far away to be with us at Christmas and at Easter.

And so, my aunt told me, in the long years of solitude and hard work, her hands chafed and hardened with calluses, Margarete farmed. In her house, or maybe in the barn, she slept well and she dreamed.

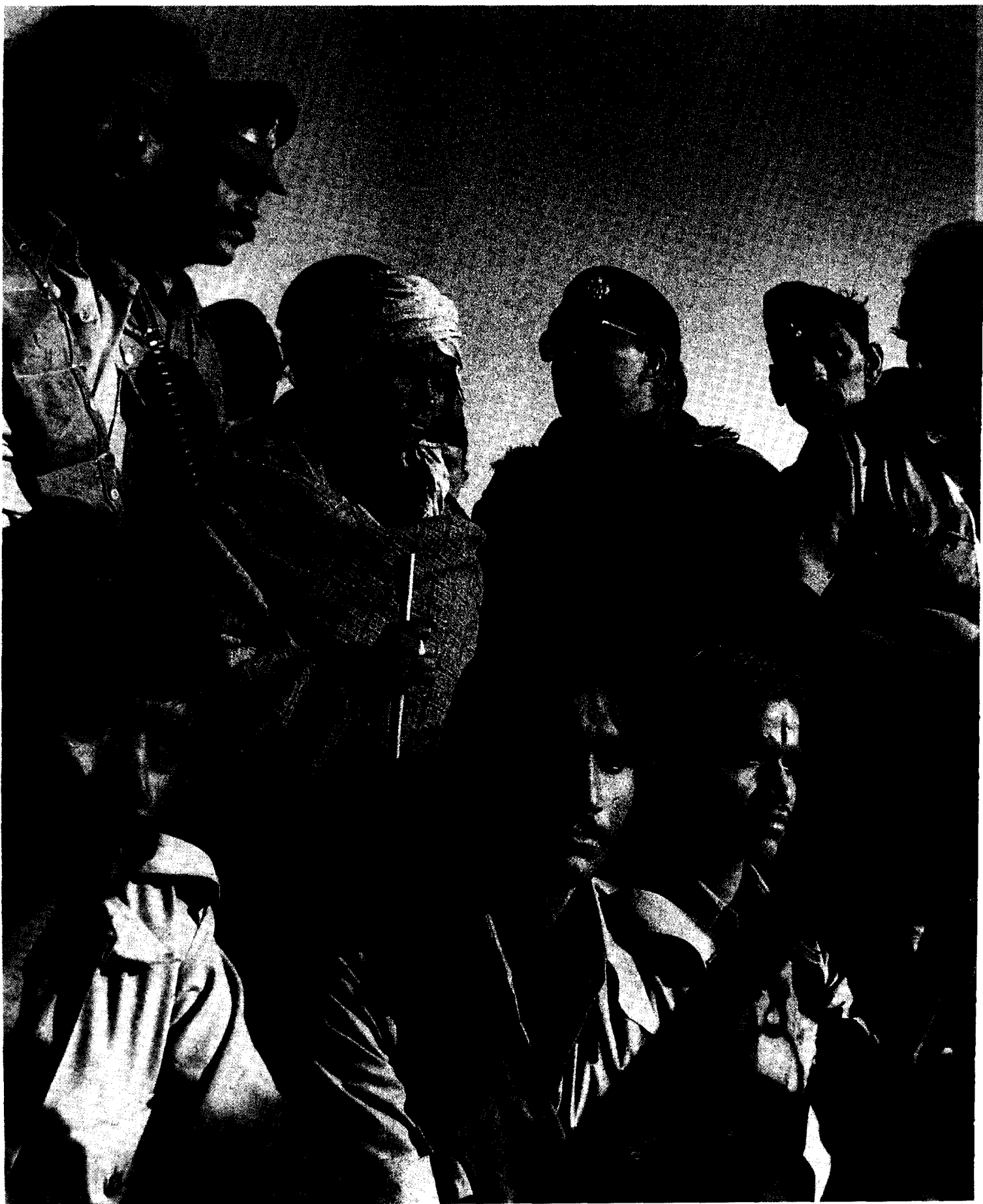
**M**Y aunt had tried to warn me, to tell me how the memories and the stories can just disappear. I always meant to ask her more about Margarete, to find out about the baby. But a year ago my aunt died suddenly, without ever growing old. I wanted to go see her, but she wouldn't let me come. I should remember her, she said, the way she was.

Since that trip to North Dakota my remaining family has scattered and lost touch. I still teach school. I live alone and think about my aunt in her determined, cheerful widowhood. Though her eyes were black and sharp with light, no one thought my aunt was beautiful. I knew her husband briefly. He was a handsome, vital man with a deep, ironic laugh. He was one of those loved teachers who brought half his students home.

I always thought I would move to the country, but I live now in a high-rise city building. In winter the wind blows hard against the glass and steel. Lying in my bed at night, I think of Margarete's letter. I imagine summer—red strawberries and the smell of watermelon lifting on the air, like the smell of rain on dusty sidewalks.

I wonder what it would be like to have a love like Margarete's. A love so warm and right that though it lasted only a short time, it kept her all her life. Sometimes when the wind shrieks so that I can't sleep, I pretend I have a daughter. I fold her small girl's body in the quilts with me and rest my face against her hair. It smells of sun and hay. We drift to sleep out in the barn, among the animals. ☽







# INDIA'S BANDIT QUEEN

by MARY ANNE WEAVER

*A saga of  
revenge—and the  
making of a  
legend of  
“the real India”*

**S**EARLY one evening in February of 1983—a bitterly cold evening, as she remembers it now—Phoolan Devi, draped in a brown wool blanket topped by a vibrant red shawl, led a group of men, twelve in all, through the ravines of the Chambal River Valley in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. A .315 Mauser hung from her shoulder, swinging against her hip; a long curved dagger was tucked into her belt; a bandolier covered her chest.

The ravines were so narrow in some places that she could touch the walls on either side. Unmappable, twisting fissures rising as high as 250 feet, they were perfectly suited as dark, hidden passageways. From time to time she glanced back at Rajendra Chaturvedi, the police superintendent of the district of Bhind. He was unarmed, at her insistence, although dressed in his uniform. A man of medium height, in his middle years, he had painstakingly negotiated her surrender over a period of nearly a year. Other than Chaturvedi, only the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh—the state's highest elected official—knew that she would be coming out of the ravines that night. Nearly 300 policemen waited at the other end, some six miles away.

Four years had passed since Phoolan Devi first entered the ravines; she had a price of \$10,400 on her head, and a score of murders and more than thirty cases of kidnapping and dacoity, or banditry, to her name. In one

*Phoolan Devi and  
her gang on the  
morning of their  
surrender*

PHOTOGRAPH BY SONDEEP SHANKAR

incident, two years earlier, that became known as the Saint Valentine's Day Massacre, she was said to have murdered twenty-two men. She was known as the Beautiful Bandit, the Goddess of Flowers, the Bandit Queen. She was not yet twenty-six.

Like dacoits before her, she and the various gangs to which she had been attached had roamed the rough wild country of the northern states of Uttar and Madhya Pradesh, pouncing on wayfarers like highwaymen of old. Villagers admired them as daring buccaneers; movies portrayed them as misunderstood rebels with a cause. For eight centuries India's dacoits have been imbued with roguish romance. But none was more romantic—or roguish—than Phoolan. "For every man this girl has killed, she has slept with two," a police inspector told me at the time. "Sometimes she sleeps with them first, before she bumps them off." The imagination of an entire nation had been captured by Phoolan.

Thus when her impending surrender at a lavish public ceremony was announced, nearly all the foreign journalists based in New Delhi (some seventy of us in all), accompanied by an equal number of Indian journalists, television-crew members, human-rights officials, feminists, and socialites, rushed to the village of Bhind. We chatted and exchanged stories; every bit of incidental lore was taken down. Of course, nobody knew who Phoolan Devi was, and none of us had ever seen the Bandit Queen before. Not even the police had a photograph of her.

The following morning, with her family, the members of her gang, and her lover and gang co-leader, Man Singh, gathered about her, Phoolan climbed the wooden steps of a twenty-three-foot-high dais, shaded by an awning of red, green, and yellow cloth. Hindi film music blasted over a public-address system. She was dressed in a new khaki police superintendent's uniform and a bright-red shawl, and she wore a red bandanna on her head, to hold back her dark-brown shoulder-length hair. The .315 hung from her shoulder, and on her wrist was a silver bangle, a religious symbol of the Sikh faith; in the breast pocket of her police uniform she carried a small silver figurine of Durga, the Hindu goddess of *shakti*: power and strength. Defiant and truculent, she flashed a cheeky grin. Her red bandanna gave her the appearance of an Apache. After bowing before portraits of Gandhi and Durga (their presence had been a condition of her surrender), she knelt in homage and touched the feet of the beaming chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, Arjun Singh. For a moment she hesitated, and then she turned toward the crowd, raising her rifle above her head. Finally, with hands folded in the traditional gesture of greeting, she demurely lowered her eyes to the ground. The crowd of some 8,000 roared its approval; the highly amplified film music seemed to shriek. It appeared to matter little to anyone in the crowd, or to the scores of VIPs seated on the dais, now shaking one another's hands, that the Beautiful Bandit, the Bandit Queen,

was really a wisp of a girl: less than five feet tall, with flat high cheekbones, a full flat nose, and slit eyes. She looked like a Nepalese boy. There was little sense in the crowd that day that a legend had come to an end; indeed, there was the feeling that a new one was about to begin.

## THE SAINT VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE

**T**HIRTEEN years have passed since Phoolan Devi—one of only three women dacoit leaders in Indian history—laid down her arms, on her own terms, and was applauded by thousands as a female Robin Hood. Since then, against the odds, she has managed to survive eleven years in prison without trial, an ailment that was suspected of being cancer, and a number of attempts on her life. In February of 1994 she was released from prison after Mulayam Singh Yadav, the newly elected chief minister of the state of Uttar Pradesh, where the Saint Valentine's Day Massacre occurred, directed lawyers for the state to withdraw all charges against her—in effect, to pardon her. The chief minister, like Phoolan, is from one of India's lowest castes, and her release was a vindication for them against an upper-caste system that they abhor. The myth of Phoolan was proceeding apace.

When I returned to New Delhi, last February, the chattering classes were still chattering about her, endlessly. She had just threatened to file her second lawsuit against the producer and director of *Bandit Queen*, a prizewinning film purportedly based on her life; she had not been consulted on it, and after a limited run the film was banned in India (the ban was later lifted). She then announced that her autobiography would be published in France in May; and next, to the astonishment of many and the sheer irritation of some, the young woman who, when asked at the time of her surrender what she wanted out of life, had replied, "What do I know about, except using a rifle and cutting grass?" made known her intention to run for a seat in the lower house of the Indian Parliament.

And in an election in which India's lowest castes were reaching for national power of their own for the first time, Phoolan became at once both symbol and avenger of atrocities committed against the lower castes—a woman who had taken justice into her own hands and achieved a singular vindication, despite her own bloody, violent trail. It was not the character of Phoolan Devi that mattered but the trend she represents: as a creation of the worst aspects of a monstrous social structure, she could lead a credible challenge against the caste system that has defined India since ancient times.

She was also arriving on the political stage at a time when India's ever-turbulent politics were in even greater confusion than usual. Each day brought new resignations from the government, or indictments by a newly activist Supreme Court, in the biggest kickback scandal ever to occur in modern India. Rarely had an election been called in an atmosphere of



such political uncertainty, and Phoolan was said to be delighted by it all.

One of the best-known women in India, with extraordinary crowd appeal, she rode the new low-caste tide in politics with assurance and panache. Sweeping through the remote villages of Uttar Pradesh in a campaign motorcade guarded by heavily armed security men, she styled herself the “Gandhi of Mirzapur” and appealed directly to the frustrations of voters from India’s lower castes, who make up some 85 percent of the electorate. Her admirers turned out in record numbers to support her as she vowed to work for the “upliftment of women, the downtrodden, and the poor.” Her unerring instinct served her as well as ever, and in May she was elected to Parliament.

It was a watershed election, in which India’s 600 million voters clearly wanted to end the domination of politics by the ruling Congress Party which had persisted for nearly half a century. Thus for the first time in independent India the stridently Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, or BJP, secured a plurality—though not a majority—of parliamentary seats. When it was unable to secure a vote of confidence, the mantle of leadership passed to a little-known politician from a “backward” caste, H. D. Deve Gowda, who had been the chief minister of Karnataka, and whose swearing-in on June 1 represented a significant break with the past: there were no Brahmins, members of the highest caste, in his Cabinet. An era of volatile coalitions seemed about to begin, as did a new era in caste politics. Heading a fractious alliance of moderate-leftist, Communist, regional, and low-caste parties (including Phoolan’s Samajwadi Party, which is led by her political mentor, the former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mulayam Singh Yadav, who is now the Indian Minister of Defense), Prime Minister Deve Gowda may have only a tenuous hold on power. He was chosen by his coalition

partners partly as a result of his relative obscurity and presumed inoffensiveness—qualities not shared by Phoolan, the most controversial back-bencher of his new governing bloc.

No other parliamentarian has stirred more passion than Phoolan has. Artfully embellishing the melodrama and romance that have gathered around her in the myth, she has since her election regularly commandeered trains at unscheduled stops and swept into prisons unannounced, demanding to see old friends. And despite a score of criminal charges pending against her in the courts, in early September she left India—traveling on her new parliamentary passport—for a one-month tour of Europe, to promote her recently released autobiography.

“Phoolan’s two great gifts are rabid cunning and fatal charm—an irresistible combination and a great achievement in a woman who is so brutal,” I was told by Sunil Sethi, a syndicated columnist and critic who began writing about Phoolan at the time of her surrender in Bhind. “It would have been impossible for Phoolan to be anything but an Indian, and she is tailor-made for the Indian imagination: since ancient times we have had an inordinate capacity to make a myth out of any story, and to demythicize the most epic into the most mundane. Phoolan is a do-it-yourself goddess who can rapidly demonize.”

And if it is a paradox that an illiterate, low-caste fisherman’s daughter has become a parable about India itself, then Phoolan Devi fails to recognize it. It is just one of the anomalies of her life. She is a child of the Chambal River Valley who took justice into her own hands. She is part Dostoevskian and part Nietzschean. She is a Hindu fatalist by birth, yet she often reflects on God, and she told me that as a dacoit she feared for her afterlife should her dead body fall into police hands. She is an introverted loner who craves attention like a child. She has frequently professed to hate men, yet she has always surrounded herself with them.



*Campaigning for Parliament in Uttar Pradesh last April*

ROBERT NICKELBERG



**HOOLAN BECAME  
BOTH SYMBOL**

**AND AVENGER OF  
ATROCITIES COMMITTED  
AGAINST THE LOWER  
CASTES—A WOMAN WHO  
HAD TAKEN JUSTICE  
INTO HER OWN HANDS  
AND ACHIEVED A  
SINGULAR VINDICATION.**

She has taken on the most astonishingly difficult roles while often acting on intuition, instinct, and whim. It is quite hard to say who Phoolan Devi really is.

One of her lawyers told me that in her view the most extraordinary thing about Phoolan was “her endless, boundless ways of reinventing herself.” Sunil Sethi said, “I don’t think her past can ever be absolutely corroborated now. So many of her close associates are dead, killed in sticky encounters; her family changes its story every day, as she does; so much of her past has been deliberately obscured.”

Nevertheless, the facts about the 1981 Saint Valentine’s Day Massacre are generally not in dispute. It took place in the hamlet of Behmai, which is set on the banks of the sacred Yamuna River and is home to about fifty families, nearly all of whom belong to the landowning and warrior Thakur caste (the second highest in the Brahmanical order), which for all intents and purposes controls the politics of Uttar Pradesh. No major road connected Behmai to any other town, and to reach it one had to cross the river or trek through narrow ravines and open fields. No one in Behmai paid any special attention to a group of about twenty people, dressed in police uniforms, as they crossed the Yamuna River that afternoon.

The party was led by a young girl—unusual, the villagers thought. She was dressed in the khaki coat with three silver stars of a deputy superintendent of police, blue jeans, and boots with zippers, they later recalled. She wore bright lipstick, her nails were painted red, and her hair was cut in an unusual bob. A Sten gun hung from her shoulder, and bands of ammunition swept across her chest. In her hand she carried a battery-powered megaphone, and as the villagers began to assemble and watch, she led her men to the village shrine: a trident emblem of Shiva, the god of destruction. The group of outsiders sat down and prayed. Then, as the men dispersed, some sealing the village off, the girl jumped onto the parapet of the village well, switched on her megaphone, and, according to testimony given to the police, began to shout, “Listen, you guys! If you love your lives, hand over all of the cash, silver, and gold you have. And listen again! I know that Lala Ram Singh and Sri Ram Singh”—rival dacoits—“are hiding in this village. If you don’t hand them over to me, I will stick my gun into your butts and tear them apart. This is Phoolan Devi speaking. *Jai Durga Mata!*” (“Victory to Durga the Mother Goddess!”)

As the men searched and looted the Thakur homes, the young girl remained at the well, pacing back and forth. Her eyes studied the village; she appeared to know it well.

After a search of nearly an hour, her men returned to the well. They had found no trace of the Ram brothers. All the villagers denied ever having seen the two men.

“You are lying!” the girl screamed through her megaphone. “I will teach you to tell the truth!”

She ordered that all the young men in the village be rounded up, and some thirty were dragged to the well. She spat on



MICHEL FIGUET/VOGUE APRIL 1996

them and warned them again: “Unless you tell me where those bastards are, I will roast you alive.” The men pleaded with her and swore that they had never seen the brothers. Her captives stood in a line before the well and she walked slowly, deliberately, down it, tearing off their turbans in a rage, and hitting many of them in the genitals with her rifle butt.

Who actually gave the order to march the men out of Behmai remains a matter of dispute, but they were marched in single file to the river. At a green embankment they



*The former Bandit Queen at home with her dog, Jackie, in New Delhi*

were ordered to kneel, their faces turned to the earth. Bursts of gunfire followed. The bodies of the thirty men crumpled and fell. Twenty-two were dead.

It was the largest dacoit massacre since the founding of modern India. And it was triply shocking: because of its scale, because it was led by a woman, and because a woman of lower caste murdered men of a vastly higher one.

## "I ROTTED IN JAIL"

**O**N a morning late in February, I met Phoolan at her modest three-floor brick-and-stucco bungalow in New Delhi. After being searched perfunctorily by one of her security guards outside, my interpreter and I entered the living room.

I had the feeling that I was in a temple, and I wondered if that was what the room was meant to be. Portraits of Durga and the Buddha hung on one of the walls, draped with tinsel and garlanded with marigolds; beneath them was a small altar of sorts, where sticks of incense burned. Just above the television set was a picture of Jesus, and across from it, on a wall of its own, was an oversized portrait of Bhimrao Ambedkar, a writer of the Indian constitution and the single most important leader of the people known as untouchables, whom Gandhi called Harijans, or Children of God, and who now call themselves Dalits. Born into a caste predestined to carry human waste and deal with dead bodies at cremation grounds, they are so low in the Brahmanical order that technically they are not even a part of it. I had been told that a photograph of Ambedkar—who escaped his station by converting to Buddhism, as tens of thousands of other Dalits have done—hangs in every lower-caste home.

There was a bit of a stir as Phoolan entered the living room, accompanied by her present husband, Umed Singh, a short, plump realtor of thirty, a high Jat by caste and a low-level politician who dabbles in Dalit politics. He had a large white bandage on his arm. A leash hung from Phoolan's wrist; at its other end a Great Dane snarled. Both dog and husband were recent acquisitions, and the bandage concealed tooth marks from the dog.

Phoolan greeted me with folded hands, and her smile was shy. She seemed shorter and darker in complexion than I recalled. Her long dark hair was pulled back somewhat haphazardly from her face, emphasizing her large, luminous dark eyes. She wore sandals and a yellow-nylon sari topped with a long chocolate-colored shawl. Her face was freshly scrubbed and bore no makeup, though there were traces of red polish on the nails of her fingers and toes. Gold bangle bracelets covered much of her forearm, and she wore earrings of gold.

She instructed me to sit next to her on a couch, and, once ensconced, she took her right leg and tucked it up in a half-lotus position, eyeing me somewhat warily as I warily eyed the dog. I suggested that perhaps she could chain Jackie—to whom she had introduced me—on the other side of the room.

"She is a reincarnation of someone else," Phoolan replied. Therefore the dog would remain, growling constantly and occasionally lunging at me, throughout the interview.

Eager to have Phoolan discuss her life since the surrender, I began by asking her about a matter that had never been fully explained—her conditions for laying down her arms.



"There were a lot," she replied. "First, and most important, that I and my gang members would not be hanged; that we would be released from prison after eight years; that we would never be handcuffed; and that we would be permitted to live in prison together—in an A-class jail" (an open VIP jail). "And that we would surrender only in Madhya Pradesh, and would never be extradited to Uttar Pradesh . . ."

"Because of Behmai?" I interrupted.

She didn't reply directly, and a frown crossed her face. After a few minutes she said, "Now let me continue, and please don't interrupt again. My other conditions were that all my cases be tried together in Madhya Pradesh in special courts; that the land that was my father's and was stolen by my cousin be rightfully returned to him; that my brother [he was then fourteen] be given a government job; that my family be resettled in Madhya Pradesh, on government land; and that they be accompanied by my goat and cow."

"Did you negotiate all of this with the government yourself?" I asked.

She looked somewhat startled. "Of course," she said.

As I listened to Phoolan, I couldn't help recalling something that one of her lawyers had told me earlier: "Phoolan is one of the most astute women I've ever met; she has an unerring instinct about people, and is vastly intelligent. It must be terribly frustrating for her to be illiterate."

All the members of Phoolan's gang served their time in prison, some of them considerably less than eight years. Most of them—including Man Singh, Phoolan's husband or lover—agreed, much to her scorn, to abrogate one of her conditions and returned to Uttar Pradesh for trial. Perhaps not surprisingly, they were all acquitted—no witnesses were willing to come forward and identify the gang. None was ever tried for the massacre in the village of Behmai. Phoolan, on the other hand, still has thirty cases pending against her in the courts of Uttar Pradesh; she was never pardoned, despite the orders of the then chief minister, which were not honored by the courts (although a new appeal was filed in her behalf by the state government recently), and she is now out of prison technically only on parole. Later this fall, depending largely on the outcome of state elections in Uttar Pradesh, the Supreme Court could rule on a case brought by the widows of Behmai demanding that Phoolan be brought to trial, prosecuted, and hanged.

I asked Phoolan why she had remained in prison for more than eleven years—as the members of her gang, one by one, had left—in violation of the agreement she had made.

"The others went to Uttar Pradesh and stood trial, in defiance of my orders," she replied.

"Why didn't you go with them?" I asked.

"If I return to Uttar Pradesh, I'll be killed." She made the statement without emotion, and began playing with her dog.

After a few moments she went on. "I *rotted* in jail. Everyone simply forgot that I was there. Indira Gandhi, who agreed to my terms, was dead. The chief minister of Madhya

Pradesh had been assigned to another state. I had no money, and I couldn't get legal aid." Anger crossed her face. "And all the members of my gang were Thakurs and Yadavs, far higher castes than mine; they had ministers in the state assemblies. I belong to the Mallahs"—one of the lowest castes, comprising boatmen and fishermen.

"I didn't know that you led a gang of upper-caste men."

"There's a lot you don't know about me," Phoolan said.

## "THE REAL INDIA"

**P**HOOLAN Devi was born in Gorha Ka Purwa, in Uttar Pradesh, a remote, inhospitable hamlet not far from Behmai. It is so tiny that it doesn't warrant an appearance on any map. Built up from the banks of the sacred Yamuna River, it is little more than a cluster of mud huts with conical thatched roofs, where sacred cows and bullocks wander as if in a daze through narrow sun-bleached lanes. Like 567,000 other obscure Indian villages, where more than half a billion people live, Gorha Ka Purwa forms part of what was once the Gandhian ideal and is still habitually called "the real India." And Phoolan in her early years was not unlike "typical" Indian women—some 70 percent of whom are born and die in villages not unlike Gorha Ka Purwa.

The typical village woman in northern India receives her inheritance at birth: that of being an unwanted burden, because she is not a son. She comes from a peasant family that owns less than an acre of land, or from a landless family whose existence depends on a landlord's whim. She can neither read nor write, though she often would like to do both. She has rarely traveled more than twenty miles from the village of her birth. If she falls ill, she believes it is because of evil spirits lurking in trees. Her sole worth lies in producing sons and working in the fields—for a meal and the equivalent of fifty cents a day. She is born into a caste, a geography, and a poverty from which there is no escape. Once she marries, at fourteen or fifteen, her life is fixed: her future becomes her mother's past.

In her village practically everything will turn on caste, the refined form of apartheid introduced into India over 2,500 years ago. Its Brahmanical order will define, with few exceptions, the social, economic, and occupational status she will have for her entire life. Caste etiquette will specify what she and her family may eat, how her marriage will be performed, the length of her sari and what ornaments she may wear, whether or not she may draw water from the village well, and through which door she may enter a temple—if she may enter it at all. Caste even determines whether or not a man may carry an umbrella in "the real India."

Phoolan's father, Devidin, whom she described to me as a "simpleton," was better off than some in Gorha Ka Purwa: he owned about an acre of land. Even so, he had had to work as a sharecropper to support his growing family. He and his wife, Moola, had the terrible fortune to produce four daugh-

# Why Does Our Government Allow Over One Million New Immigrants to Come Here Every Year?

**... When a Majority of Americans Say We Should Not Admit More Than 100,000 a Year at Most!!**

A Roper poll, sponsored by NPG, Inc. and released in February, showed that a majority of Americans (54%) want immigration cut to not more than 100,000 a year. So why does our Federal Government allow more than **ten times that many** to come here every year?

The poll showed that 70% of Americans – **that's over two out of three** – want immigration cut drastically to not over 300,000 a year. How in the world can our government possibly justify an immigration policy that allows **four times that many** to come here every year? Don't our elected representatives have an obligation to heed the clearly expressed wishes of the American public?

The poll also showed that a substantial number of Americans (20%) simply want immigration halted completely. In other words, **one American in five wants no immigration at all.**

**We urge Congress, with the vigorous support of President Clinton, to enact legislation that would drastically reduce the present level of immigration, and thus bring our immigration policy into line with the clearly expressed wishes of the overwhelming majority of the American people.**

## **Illegal Immigration - Out of Control**

Polls have shown for years that, almost unanimously, Americans want illegal immigration stopped. Despite that, our Federal Government has done very little to reduce illegal immigration, much less stop it. An estimated 350,000 illegal aliens settle here permanently each year. **That is over three times more than the 100,000 a year a majority of Americans favor for total immigration.** These illegal settlers join a pool of an estimated **five to six million** illegal aliens who are already living here permanently in violation of our laws.

**The Roper poll cited above showed that 74% of Americans (three out of every four) want illegal aliens identified and deported.** So why is our government not doing just that? In 1994 only about 40,000 illegal aliens were deported. A vastly increased program of deportations would not only deter prospective illegal migrants abroad, but also motivate those already here to leave voluntarily.

## **The Central Issue - Overpopulation**

**NPG urges a drastic reduction in immigration solely because of its contribution to the disastrous growth of our U.S. population. We are on the path from our present**

population of 265 million to a population of nearly 500 million by 2100. **More than 90% of that growth will be the direct result of post-2000 immigration.**

Immigration is the driving force behind the population growth that is devastating our environment and the quality of our lives. **Primarily because of immigration we are rushing at breakneck speed toward an environmental and economic disaster.**

## **U.S. Population Size - A Vitally Important National Issue**

Other things being equal, **our population size determines our impact on our already over-stressed environment and increasingly scarce resources. The size of our population is, therefore, a vitally important national issue.**

If we are to have any hope at all of creating an economy that will be sustainable indefinitely, in a sound and healthy environment, with an adequate standard of living for all, we need a smaller, not a larger, U.S. population. **But we will never be able to achieve a smaller population unless we reduce immigration to a small fraction of its present level. That is a simple fact.**

**Isn't there someone among our political leaders who is willing to recognize the need for a smaller U.S. population and for public policies to achieve it?** He or she would have the support of a majority of Americans. The Roper poll cited above showed that 54% of Americans believe that our country is already overpopulated.

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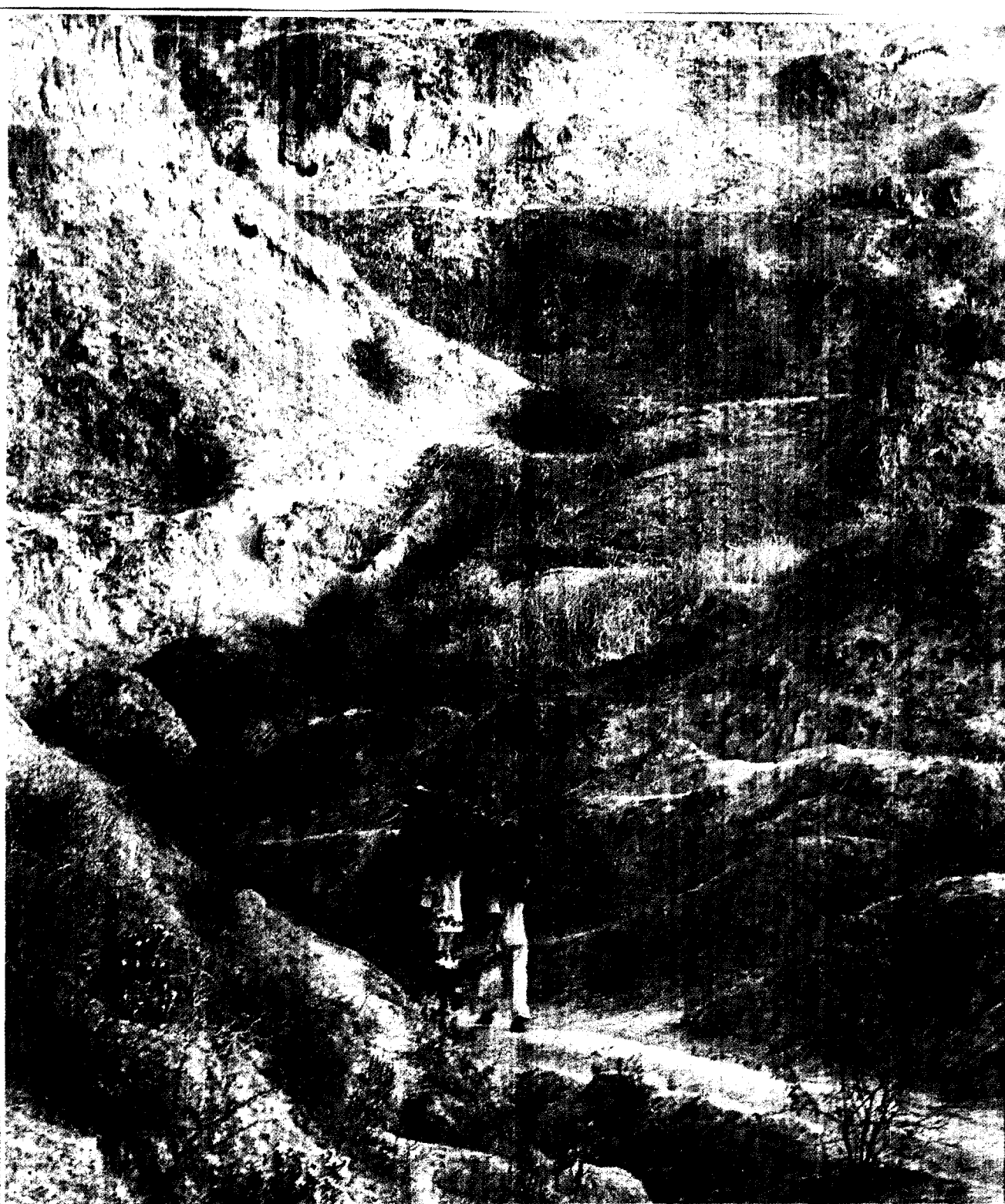
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ters—Phoolan was the second oldest—before they finally achieved a son. And all manner of other frustrations befell Devidin. He had lost nearly all of his inheritance, including some fifteen acres of land, to an elder brother and the brother's son, Maiyadin, both of whom were far wiler and better connected politically in Gorha Ka Purwa than he was. But he was too old, too tired, too poor, he told his family, to struggle for anything. The young Phoolan was shocked and outraged.

When she was ten, she began an often lonely battle to reclaim the family land. A spirited and precocious child, with a sharp tongue and wit, she taunted her cousin Maiyadin in the

village square, hurling profanities at him and accusing him of all nature of things in front of his upper-caste friends. Then, along with her elder sister, who had just turned twelve, she effected a sit-in on Maiyadin's land. It was short-lived. Maiyadin arrived and, according to Phoolan, beat her unconscious with a brick.

When she was eleven, at the insistence of Maiyadin, Phoolan was married to a widower three times her age from a distant village—in exchange for a cow. Despite her age, her hus-

*The rugged ravines  
of the Chambal  
River Valley,  
in northern India*



band forced himself upon her, and beat her frequently. She left him shortly after her twelfth birthday. Walking across an area the width of Texas, alone and terrified and usually in tears, she finally reached Gorha Ka Purwa. Her parents were distraught: women don't leave their husbands in the real India. "What can we do?" her mother wailed. "You have heaped disgrace upon us all. There is no alternative: you must commit suicide. Go jump in the village well!"

Phoolan didn't jump—though she considered it—and she came of age in Gorha Ka Purwa. Over the next ten years she alternately fled the village and returned. During adolescence she married one of her cousins, Kailash, who was already married; consequently the union did not last long. She cut the grass on her family's plot and grazed its water buffalo. She developed a reputation for promiscuity, and became known as a scorned woman, who bathed naked in the Yamuna alone.

All the while she continued her land battle with Maiyadin. When she was twenty, she argued her father's case before the Allahabad High Court. An old court stenographer, now retired, told me one afternoon that his most abiding image of *that* Phoolan was of an exceptionally animated girl with lively eyes and a flair for drama. She could have been a thespian.

The following year, in 1979, Phoolan, then twenty-one, was arrested on the basis of what she told me was a fraudulent charge of robbery at Maiyadin's home. She spent a month in police custody, where she was beaten and raped—as large numbers of Indian women are. Many of the policemen who assaulted her were men whom Maiyadin counted as his friends. *That* Phoolan was left "a whimpering piece of rubbish in the corner of a dirty room with rats staring me in the eye," Phoolan later said.

But it was the evening of the day of the festival of Sawan Dui, in early July of that year, that was the turning point in Phoolan Devi's life. She had heard rumors, as had everyone in the village, that a gang of dacoits, led by a notoriously cruel man named Babu Gujar, was encamped on the riverbank; she may or may not have received a letter from the gang threatening to kidnap her or to cut off her nose—a not uncommon punishment inflicted on women for a perceived indiscretion in the villages of northern India.

It was just past midnight, and Phoolan was nearly asleep in her family's home when she heard the thud of boots; men carrying torches sprang into silhouette against the hut's mud walls. What followed remains obscured, for Phoolan's own accounts have varied significantly.

Whatever the truth of that evening, Phoolan was marched out of Gorha Ka Purwa and into the ravines. Perhaps she had indeed been kidnapped. Perhaps Maiyadin had paid the dacoits to take her away. Perhaps she was trying to protect her young brother, whom she adored. Or perhaps she simply walked away from her life in the real India.

For the next seventy-two hours she was brutalized by Babu Gujar. Then, on the evening of the third day, his chief

lieutenant and deputy, Vikram Mallah, who had admired Phoolan from afar over the years, shot Babu Gujar dead. Word of the killing spread throughout the ravines, as did the fact that Vikram Mallah—a member of Phoolan's caste—had not only slain his upper-caste leader but had assumed the leadership of the gang. Phoolan became his mistress, and in the villages and towns of the Chambal River Valley, where for generations people have taken their own revenge and settled their own scores, killing and maiming in the name of justice and God, women composed songs about the exploits of the low-caste village girl who became a dacoit and was vindicated, her honor restored.

Phoolan, for her part, had a rubber stamp made, which she used as a letterhead: "Phoolan Devi, dacoit beauty; beloved of Vikram Mallah, Emperor of Dacoits."

### PHOOLAN'S REVENGE

"Vikram taught her everything she knows," Khuswant Singh, a distinguished editor and author who was among the first to attempt to piece together the contradictory accounts of Phoolan's life, told me one February morning over tea. "He was a handsome young chap, fair, tall, and wiry, and was obviously very taken with her. He had her long hair cropped, and bought her a transistor radio and a cassette recorder, as she was inordinately fond of listening to music from films. He also taught her how to handle a gun; she became a crack shot."

Vikram also told her, according to a popular ballad still sung in the villages, "If you are going to kill, kill twenty, not just one. For if you kill twenty, your fame will spread; if you kill only one, they will hang you as a murderess."

Over the next year Vikram and Phoolan led their gang through the badlands of India—the sandy ridges, ravines, and jungles of Uttar and Madhya Pradesh long controlled by the dacoits, an area that covers some 8,000 square miles. They robbed and looted, held up trains, ransacked upper-caste villages and homes, murdered and kidnapped. Each operation, at Phoolan's insistence, was preceded and followed by an excursion to one or another of a string of temples hidden away from public view, all honoring the goddess Durga. Phoolan's instincts had never failed her, and in her mind it was because Durga directed and protected her. Vikram came to rely increasingly on her sometimes uncanny ability to interpret omens and signs.

When asked at a press conference following her surrender in 1983 if she had ever known fear, Phoolan replied, "Every day I have lived with fear. One night in the jungle I was sitting by our campfire and felt something slithering on my thighs. I realized it was a snake. I quickly picked it up and threw it aside, but I knew that it was an ill omen, so we picked up our guns and ran. Ten minutes later we saw lights of a strong police contingent at our campsite. God sends his own signals."

Perhaps the most important omen came late on a summer night in August of 1980, soon after the festival of Sawan Dui, during the monsoon rains. Phoolan spotted a crow sitting on a dead tree at the edge of their jungle camp and pleaded with Vikram to leave. But that time he didn't indulge her, and they went to bed.

"There was a loud noise, the sound of a bullet being fired," Phoolan told the Indian author Mala Sen, in a series of prison diaries that later formed the basis for a book about her early life. "Vikram sat up suddenly, and I thought the police had surrounded us. I reached for our rifles but they had been removed. Then, Vikram fell forward." A second shot followed, and Vikram died, his head in Phoolan's lap.

His assassins were two dacoit brothers who only a few days earlier had rejoined the gang, after a stint in prison. Their names were Sri Ram and Lala Ram. Vikram Mallah's murder was in revenge for the death of the gang's former leader, Babu Gujar, and for the totally unpardonable fact that he, a low-caste Mallah, had assumed the leadership of the gang. Like Babu Gujar, Sri Ram and Lala Ram belonged to an upper, landowning caste, and within dacoit gangs, too, everything turned on caste.

Phoolan Devi is said never to have fully recovered from Vikram Mallah's death, and she has always adamantly refused to discuss what followed next, but it is known from reliable witnesses that she was gagged and perhaps chloroformed, and her legs and arms were bound, before Sri Ram and Lala Ram threw her into a boat. The boat set sail down the Yamuna, not docking until it reached Behmai. There Phoolan was locked in a filthy, darkened hut, where she was held captive for three weeks. Every evening, shortly after midnight, a man whom she could not see would open the door, and others would follow, one by one. They were tall, silent, turbaned Thakur men, and they would rape her until she lost consciousness.

On the twenty-third day of her captivity Phoolan was dragged out of the shed by Sri Ram and Lala Ram. Bruises covered her body, her hair was filthy and matted, and her eyes were dead. Sri Ram demanded that she fetch him water from the village well, where the Thakur men had assembled, jeering and hooting. From behind shuttered windows their women looked down on the village square. When Phoolan refused to fetch the water, Sri Ram kicked her savagely and ripped off the blanket she wore. Naked, she limped to the village well. The men of Behmai are said to have laughed and spat on her.

Late that evening, after Sri Ram and Lala Ram had left for the ravines, Santosh Pandit, a friend of Phoolan's and a priest from a nearby village, quietly entered the shed where she was being held and carried her to safety in the back of a bullock cart. With the help of Man Singh, a fellow dacoit, she subsequently formed her own gang. Seventeen months later, on Saint Valentine's Day, she returned to Behmai.

Word of the massacre quickly spread through the ravines and into the corridors of power in New Delhi and Uttar Pra-

desh. Thakur power and domination had never been challenged in this manner before. A new cycle of revenge killings seemed about to begin, and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi could ill afford further caste violence, or a caste war.

## THE KING OF THE DACOITS

JORA is a market town in Madhya Pradesh of some 20,000 people, a grain center with a booming black-market economy. Hidden away in the Chambal River Valley, some three miles from the jungle and the ravines, it is not far from Bhind, where Phoolan surrendered in 1983. It has also long been known as a favored way station for dacoits, who come here for relaxation, to shop, to pray, and sometimes to surrender—most often in the past to members of the Gandhi Peace Foundation and more recently to chief ministers in political celebrations, as Phoolan did. I had come here to meet the Gandhians—and perhaps a dacoit—in the hope that they could tell me about dacoit life and about whether Phoolan, who was about to embark on her election campaign, could return to the ravines, especially across the border in Uttar Pradesh, without risking her life.

I traveled with Deputy Commandant Raghunandan Sharma, the most highly decorated officer in the Indian police. He had spent his entire professional life hunting down dacoits, and had killed 365 of them. He is a portly man in his sixties, with a slight paunch, a small white moustache, and a balding head. He had just retired from the service, but he still liked to keep his pistol tucked into his pocket, or his rifle over his shoulder, comfortably resting on his hip. He had been a handpicked choice to end the dacoit menace—a Hercule Poirot of the ravines.

Earlier that morning, at his bungalow in the town of Gwalior, where Phoolan had spent her eleven years in jail, Sharma told me what it had been like then. "The dacoits almost always had the upper hand," he said. "They knew the topography, every tree and blade of grass; they held the high ground; and their weapons were far superior to ours—when we had .303 Enfield rifles, they had reloading semiautomatic guns. In the summer the temperature in the ravines goes well above a hundred and twenty degrees. It is scorching heat, there is no water, and when we marched, we kicked up choking dust. The dacoits' lookouts could chart our movements simply by watching the clouds of dust."

"There are still some ten gangs out there," he said, looking out the window in the direction of the ravines. "Despite our best efforts, the ravines and jungles are still not safe; you can enter them only with armed guards. A hundred or so dacoits are still at large, including two women—one of them a sworn enemy of Phoolan's."

I asked Sharma to tell me about the lore of the dacoits. "They're not called dacoits here," he said. "They're called

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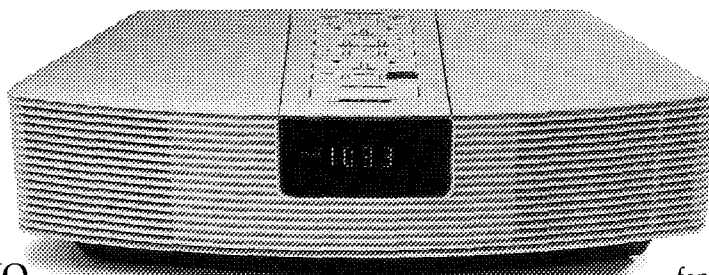
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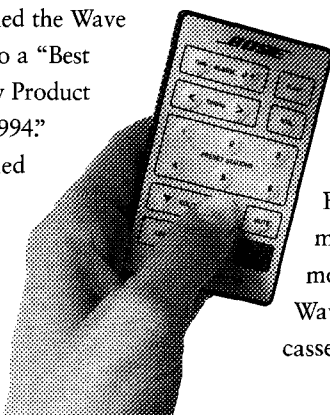
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*bhagis*, or rebels. Every village wants one of its members to join a gang so that the village is protected. And it's often said in the ravines that if a man is blessed enough to have three sons, one will join the uniformed service, the armed forces or the police; one will stay at home and till the land; and the third will become a dacoit. The first will thus give the family legal authority, the second the assurance that the land will not go to waste, and the third will guarantee the social prestige of the family."

With that he jumped up from his chair, slinging his rifle over his shoulder and donning a navy-blue beret. "Come along," he instructed. "Let us move to the ravines."

We drove in a convoy of two cars. A second car would be necessary, Sharma explained, if we happened upon any dacoits along the way. The ravines loomed suddenly on both sides of the road: a vast, crumbling maze of eroded earth and rock, peaks and dips, they extended more than a hundred miles. They looked to me like monumental anthills. We left our car and with some difficulty managed to climb to the top of one of them. All around us the ravines towered majestically. Their combinations of cliffs and mudbanks, camel thorn and elephant grass, tangled roots and passage-ways, suggested an immense beige, brown, and yellow patchwork quilt. Phoolan had told me that it took her a week just to learn to run in them—the seemingly hard earth proved to be as pliant as sand. And the undulation of the land was so extreme, the passage-ways so narrow, that it was impossible to know whether anyone was in the ravine beyond.

"Why does someone become a dacoit, other than prestige?" I asked Sharma after we had returned to our car and commenced speeding along the road.

He replied without hesitation, "For the majority of dacoits, land is the key: they fight for it, kill for it, die for it, in the ravines. Also, some join for reasons of revenge: if the system gives you no justice, then you take justice

into your own hands. And, I am very sorry to say, many become dacoits because of the high-handedness of the police: police beatings, police inefficiency, fear of the police."

Every reason he cited applied to Phoolan.

Once we arrived in Jora, Sharma made some telephone calls. "We're in luck! We're in luck!" he shouted, as he dashed toward me across a crowded marketplace. "We will be meeting the number-two man to Mohar Singh, a most dreaded and most feared dacoit. Quickly! Quickly!"

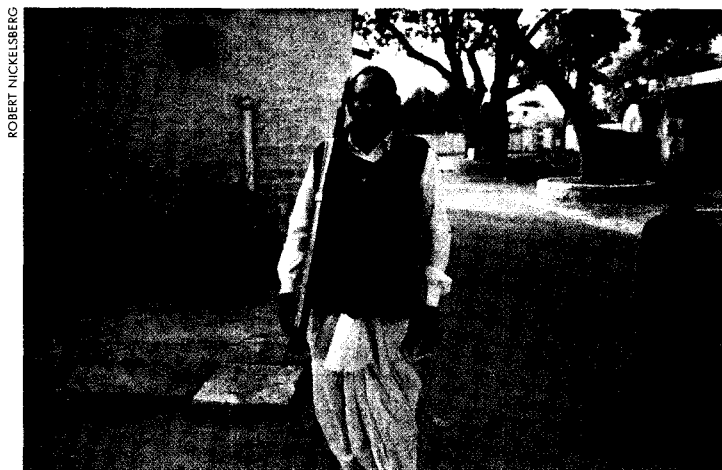
We jumped back into our cars and careered through the marketplace and down a series of narrow dirt lanes until we arrived at Jora's rather di-

lapitated government guesthouse. In a matter of minutes the most dreaded and most feared Ram Charan arrived, looking, at least to me, like anything but a dacoit. A man of presence and impeccable taste, he was nattily dressed in a freshly starched white *kurta* pajama set off by a gray silk vest and a beige silk scarf. His hair and handlebar moustache were steel

gray, and his eyes astonishingly blue. He was accompanied by a lawyer who in hushed tones relayed something in Hindi to Sharma.

"I do not believe it!" Sharma exclaimed with excitement. "Madame, you are so in luck! You are about to meet the most feared and ruthless dacoit of the Chambal ravines: Mohar Singh *himself*." (The most feared and ruthless was at the moment at Jora's courthouse, doing municipal business, I was told. He was now the elected headman of the village of Mehgaon.) Sharma beamed. "Can you believe it? Here in one room you will have the Chambal River Valley's chief dacoit hunter, together with the chief dacoit."

As Sharma paced up and down the room, I asked Ram Charan to tell me about the terms under which he and Mohar Singh had led more than 500 dacoits in laying down their arms, in a curious spectacle that later became known as the great dacoit surrender of 1972. Dacoity was then at its height,



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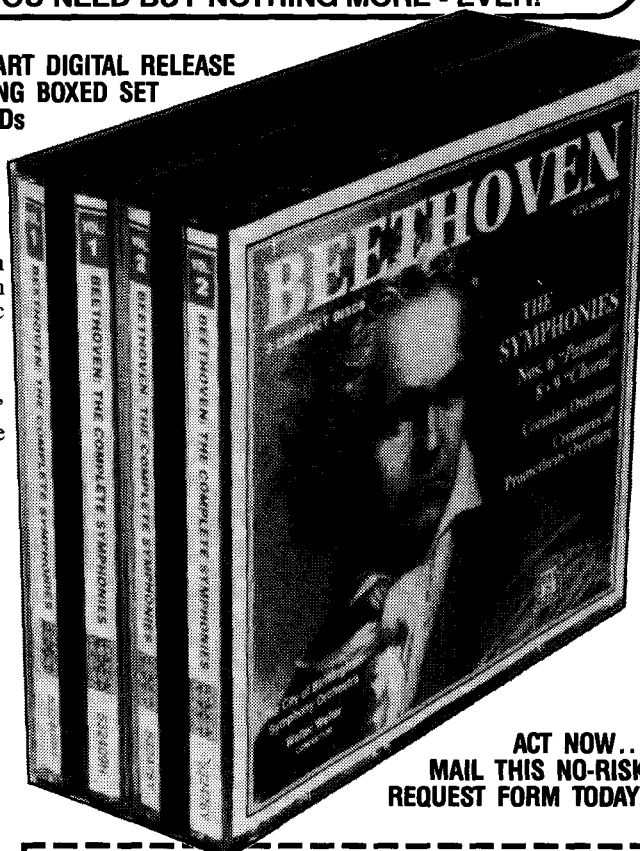
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and some 200 gangs roamed the ravines; in their encounters with the police hundreds were being killed on both sides. Then, in a highly unorthodox experiment, Jaya Prakash Narayan, a gentle Gandhian, persuaded about forty skeptical gang leaders—including Mohar Singh, an upper-caste Gujar and a former wrestler, who led the largest of the gangs—and the even more skeptical authorities to give surrender and rehabilitation a try.

***Aftermath of a  
dacoit-led  
massacre in Uttar  
Pradesh, 1982***

Our conversation was interrupted by chaos outside the

His white *kurta* pajama was topped by a black waistcoat. With his swiftly darting black eyes he immediately located Sharma in the room. The two men, who had attempted to kill each other many times, stared at each other awkwardly. Then they embraced. After a bit of confusion over where everyone would sit, Mohar Singh selected a chair on the far side of the room, with his back to the wall. With a sweep of his large ringed hand he instructed me to take the chair to his right.

Once again he studied us all. He had not yet uttered a word. Then he turned to me and said, "I have murdered more than four hundred men."



PRASHANT PANJARI

guesthouse, as a group of children began to cheer amid the screeching of tires. It was a powerful image when Mohar Singh and his entourage entered the guesthouse: the guns, the waxed moustaches, the gold jewelry, and on their foreheads bright red *tilak* marks, emblazoned by a priest at a nearby temple where they had earlier been. Silently Mohar Singh, a tall man of muscular build, magnificently moustached, surveyed the room. Only his obviously dyed black hair and moustache betrayed his sixty-two years. A rifle hung from his shoulder; he wore a Rolex watch, a gold bracelet, and many rings of gold.

"He had the largest reward ever offered in the history of India on his head," Sharma added. Mohar Singh looked around the room and then he smiled.

The reward had been the equivalent of \$26,500. "Why was it so large?" I asked.

"Because my gang was so terrifying," Mohar Singh replied. "It was also the largest in the ravines—a hundred and twenty-five men—and altogether we committed some five hundred heinous acts."

"Such as?"



"Murder, kidnapping for ransom [his specialty], dacoity in general," he replied. "In the early days I was very fond of killing people in order to create terror in my area, and to extend my control. If I suspected that someone was a police informer, I'd kill him rather than lose my time in asking him questions. I was a very impatient young man." He paused and added, "I killed needlessly; I can say that now."

Before his surrender Mohar Singh had controlled about 180 miles of the ravines, and had been challenged by no one: he had his own army, system of justice, and government. He also had the reputation of being a bit of a Robin Hood. I asked him about that.

"Well, there's no point in robbing the poor," he said.

I asked if he had ever had women in his gang.

"Most certainly not."

"Why not?"

"I don't believe in it," he replied. "They're useless. They compromise a gang's security; they push men too much; they're not strong enough to walk fifty or sixty kilometers in a night. Many a gang has fallen, or been infiltrated, because they have had a woman in their ranks."

"What do you think of Phoolan Devi?"

He was plainly irritated, even before he spoke. "She's not a real dacoit," he said. "If it wasn't for you people in the media, no one would have ever heard of her. She's a character-loose woman." I noticed that he chose that phrase with care. "And she never had one significant encounter with the police."

Sharma, Ram Charan, and the entourage—all of whom had relished their encounters—indicated agreement by nodding their heads.

Mohar Singh had begun to fidget in his chair, and I sensed that he wanted to leave, so I asked him what he missed most about his life as a dacoit.

"That was then and this is now," he said with a hint of nostalgia in his voice. Then he answered my question: "I was the uncrowned king of the region. I miss the authority."

"But now," the king of the dacoits went on, "although I had lakhs and lakhs of rupees, I am merely the president of the Municipal Corporation of Mehgaon. But I was democratically elected; no one even stood against me." He smiled, glancing at his entourage assembled around the room, with their rifles balanced against their knees.

I asked him what his plans were, and he replied that he would be standing in elections later in the year for a seat in the state assembly of Madhya Pradesh. He was now on an election tour of sorts, he explained, to round up former members of his gang so that they could participate in his election campaign. Then he added, almost as an afterthought, that he had also recently starred in a Hindi film, *The Dacoits of Chambal*—playing himself. In a bustle of activity he swept out of the room, surrounded by his men.

"Will he be elected?" I asked Sharma.

He responded, "Without a doubt."

As we watched Mohar Singh drive away in a cloud of dust, I asked Ram Charan, the No. 2, if in his opinion Phoolan Devi could return to the ravines.

He thought for a moment and then said, "Vendettas are a major part of our life here. It's quite possible that if Phoolan has killed, she will be killed in return. They will find her, of that I'm sure. It's blood for blood in the ravines."

## THE REINCARNATION OF DURGA

AS I waited in Phoolan's sitting room late one morning while she was doing a television interview in another room, her husband, Umed Singh, joined me, alternately shouting and whispering into two telephones. The campaign for the May elections was just getting under way, and elsewhere in the house a Buddhist monk swathed in saffron robes, who is one of Phoolan's advisers, was arranging a speaking tour; one of her lawyers was sifting through a pile of court briefs; and an uncle of hers from the village, a withered, shuffling man, came and went through the rooms, occasionally shouting into a telephone.

"I'm sorry—I'm sorry I'm late," Phoolan said as she burst into the room, dressed in a silk sari of intricate brocade. She looked like a prom queen of sixteen. Her voice was full of energy, and a torrent of words spilled out: "Politics is so astonishing! I'm getting so many offers from different parties, but what can I do? If I accept one of them, then the others won't court me anymore. And I've got to be friendly with all the parties at the moment, and antagonize none of them, because of all the court cases pending against me in Uttar Pradesh. I actually had dinner with the *governor* of Uttar Pradesh last night; he flew me to the [state] capital secretly, in a military plane!" She paused to take a breath, and then she ordered her husband into the kitchen to get her something to eat. I had been told that in Hindi she often refers to him as "my wife."

I reminded Phoolan that she had told me earlier that if she returned to Uttar Pradesh, she'd be killed. Now she was preparing to campaign there. She simply nodded her head in agreement, appearing to see no contradiction between the two statements.

When I asked why a parliamentary seat was so important to her, an adviser answered for her: "Parliamentary immunity."

Since Phoolan had threatened to immolate herself outside the Censor Board and at a movie theater where *Bandit Queen* was being shown if it was not immediately banned, I asked her what she most objected to in the film.

She didn't answer right away. Then she said, "It's simply not the story of my life, so how can they claim it is? How can they say 'This is a true story' when my cousin Maiyadin, the major nemesis of my life, isn't even in the film? There's absolutely no mention of my family's land dispute. In the film I'm portrayed as a sniveling woman, always in tears,

who never took a conscious decision in her life. I'm simply shown as being raped, over and over again."

"But you were raped . . ." I began.

She interrupted. "You can call it rape in your fancy language," she said, and her voice began to rise. "Do you have any idea what it's *like* to live in a village in India? What you call rape, that kind of thing happens to poor women in the villages every day. It is assumed that the daughters of the poor are for the use of the rich. They assume that we're their property. In the villages the poor have no toilets, so we must go to the fields, and the moment we arrive, the rich lay us there; we can't cut the grass or tend to our crops without being accosted by them. We are the property of the rich."

She fell silent, as if she were considering whether or not to go on. Then she said, "They wouldn't *let* us live in peace; you will never understand what kind of humiliation that is. If they wanted to rape us, to molest us, and our families objected, then they'd rape us in front of our families."

She looked away and then turned back toward me, and I asked what had driven her to stand up.

She said immediately, "Anger."

She paused, and went on, "When I think back, I lose my balance, and sometimes I feel completely lost. I wonder how all of this could have happened to me; how I could have suffered all that I have. My mind aches, and I become confused. I can't think of it."

"What about the happy moments?"

"Once I became a dacoit and started making lists of all the people who had tortured me, who had abused me, and I was able to pay them back in kind, that pleased me tremendously—when they were brought before me, and fell at my feet to pay obeisance to me. The fear of the gun is a powerful thing. I was the master, and those who had once abused me now worshipped me. I was actually happy most of the time that I was a dacoit. There was a song I used to sing: 'Shall we kill you or shall we let you go?' It's from a Hindi film. I used to sing it very often in front of my captives, and I also sang it as we marched through the ravines. Being a dacoit was a hard life. We'd go from one state to another, walking the entire night. Then we'd have to survey the area, pay our informers, and bribe the politicians and the police. Our decisions on whom to kidnap, which villages and homes to raid, were not haphazardly made. We had excellent intelligence."

"What do you miss most about your life as a dacoit?" I asked.

"The power and authority," she said. "When people betray me now, like those bastards at Channel Four, [the filmmakers] Shekhar Kapur and Bobby Bedi, if I were still a dacoit, I could have taught them a proper lesson." She looked at me and smiled.

She became reflective, tilting her face and resting her chin on her hand. Then she said, "There's such a big difference between life in New Delhi and life in the Chambal Valley

ravines. There are two codes, two sets of mores, customs, and legalities. In New Delhi people are so much more duplicitous: they promise you things, and then behind your back they do precisely the opposite. In Chambal they'll say things openly, they'll shout it from the rooftops, and then they'll follow through. City life is very different; you have law courts. But out in the valley you can do things your way, and by the will of God."

She fell silent, and her eyes studied the room. Finally she turned to me and asked, "What did you think of the ravines when you were there?"

"They're astonishingly beautiful," I replied.

"Did you meet my family?"

I told her that I had tried, but that they had been in her village at the time.

"Then whom did you meet?" Her entire demeanor changed, and she sounded like the interrogator she had once been.

"A number of dacoits, including Mohar Singh."

"What did he say about me?" she demanded, and I replied that he had not only claimed that she had never had a significant encounter with the police but also questioned whether she had actually been the leader of her gang.

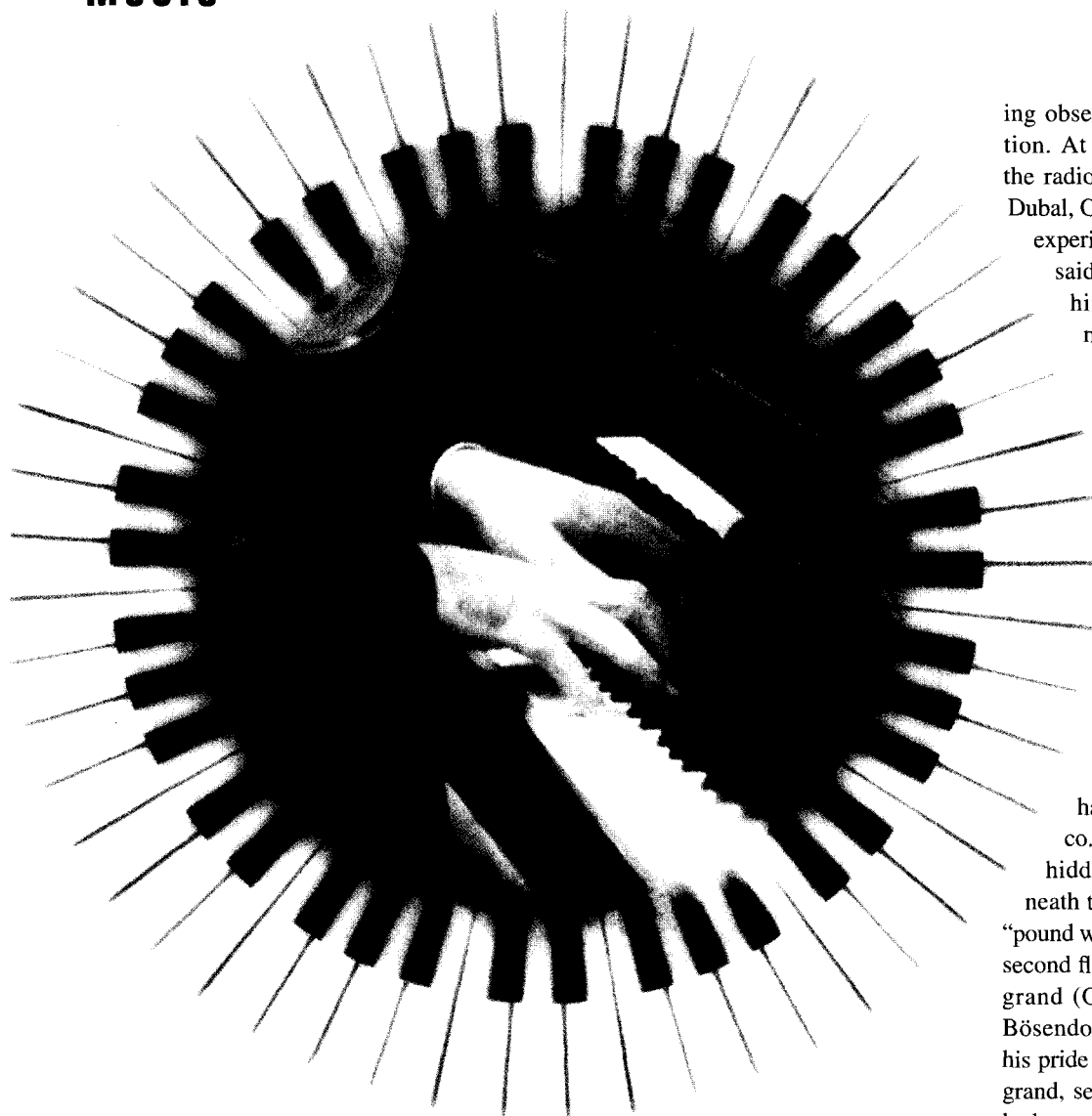
She threw up her hands, and anger crossed her face. Then she said, "Let him come here and say it to my face. I dare him!"

"But *were* you the leader? And if so, how did you get to the top?" I persisted, adding that there were some, including Mohar Singh, who claimed that not unlike a host of women leaders across what was once British India, including Prime Ministers in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, she had simply inherited dynastic power from a man.

She looked somewhat startled, and then she said, "Of course I was the leader! And don't ever question me about that again. And let me ask you something: What's so strange about that? Wasn't Indira Gandhi the Prime Minister of India? Yes, if she had not been Nehru's daughter, she might not have been, but she lasted in office far longer than he did. And if Mohar Singh doesn't think that women should lead gangs, why doesn't *he* rise up against those who have raped? If all these gang leaders, who happen to be men, would fight against these atrocities, then they would end. It's not to earn money that a woman becomes a dacoit; it's for retribution and revenge. And you tell Mohar Singh that I had absolutely no problem in being the leader of men. Instead of calling me Phoolan, they often called me Phool Singh—which was a testament to my strength. They cleaned my guns, cooked my food, and every morning and every evening they bowed before me, and paid homage to me." She paused, apparently considering her next words carefully, and then she said, "For centuries every dacoit has honored the goddess Durga. And she is what sustained me: whatever she has, I have; whatever she wants, I want. And all of the men in my gang considered me to be a reincarnation of Durga." ☸







## Big, Brilliant American Sound

*Garrick Ohlsson comes back to Chopin  
and rethinks his career  
as a pianist*

**I**N a recent Chopin recital at Alice Tully Hall, in New York, the classical pianist Garrick Ohlsson concluded a series of encores with "The Minute Waltz." He played it sublimely, and at a speed that made one audience member remark that it should be called "The Forty-Five-Second Waltz." Then he cracked the climactic note. Ohl-

**by Michael Ullman**

son gave the offending key a surprised, rueful look, as if it were at fault, and cheerfully corrected himself.

As he demonstrated, Ohlsson has a grand technique but not the grand manner. An unpretentious man who stands six feet four and has the bulk to match, Ohlsson, who is forty-eight, clearly knows what that manner is, hav-

ing observed Arthur Rubinstein in action. At a lecture-demonstration with the radio personality and author David Dubal, Ohlsson told of a crucial musical experience as a child. He was nine, he said, when his piano teacher took him to hear Rubinstein at Carnegie Hall. Rubinstein played Chopin's G Minor Ballade, and Ohlsson decided he wanted to become a pianist. He gave a lovely imitation of Rubinstein at the piano, looking seraphically skyward, rocking backward, his trunk and right leg held rigid and his arms flapping the air well above the keys.

I later spoke with Ohlsson at his Manhattan apartment, a comfortable duplex with a little garden in the back. (He has since moved to San Francisco.) On the first floor Ohlsson had hidden a Steinway upright underneath the stairs for when he wanted to "pound without breaking strings." On the second floor he kept both a Bösendorfer grand (Ohlsson records on sonorous Bösendorfers) and what seemed to be his pride and joy—a Mason and Hamlin grand, seventy-five years old, which he had recently bought. On the Mason and Hamlin's music stand was the piano part of the Dvořák Piano Concerto, which Ohlsson was about to play in concert.

Naturally strong enough to have been called the Paul Bunyan of pianists, with huge hands and conveniently slender fingers, Ohlsson is clearly ambivalent about exercise—he described the physical demands of a certain Chopin étude in B minor as "worse than the NordicTrack."

Ohlsson thinks of himself as "absolutely a nonspecialized kind of musician." He performs a dizzyingly wide repertoire, from Haydn to Stefan Wolpe, including the tart études of Debussy and big romantic works like the Busoni, Dvořák, and Stenhammar concertos. When I talked to him, he was about to record a disc of twentieth-century classics by Prokofiev, Bartók, Barber, and Webern. Until recently Ohlsson was performing world premieres about once a year, he told me.

His early fame came playing Chopin: in 1970 Ohlsson became the first American to win Warsaw's International Chopin Competition, beating out such future stars as Mitsuko Uchida and Emanuel Ax. He was expected to go on a grand tour playing two or three big works and a Chopin program. He decided otherwise, telling his agent, Harold Shaw, that he wanted to learn a wider repertoire and avoid being typecast. Ohlsson was lucky, he was told—most managers would have dropped him when he made the seemingly irrational decision not to exploit his recent success. Perhaps Shaw should have predicted as much anyway: Ohlsson had begun his debut recital in New York with a twenty-minute atonal piece by Louis Weingarden, because Weingarden was a friend.

**I**N fact, Ohlsson hasn't had quite the steady career one would have expected. Early middle age is tough on virtuosos who are no longer adolescent wonders but hardly ready to be seen as aging masters. In recent years he has come into his own again; his recording of the Busoni concerto created a stir, and he is recording all Chopin's piano pieces for the Arabesque label, in a project that should be finished in two years.

Ohlsson describes Chopin as "equal parts magic and structure." He wants to prove that in terms of his formal qualities Chopin is "as taut and as perfect as Bach, Mozart, or Brahms," even if no composer is more likely to evoke what Ohlsson calls a "delicious stupor."

The problem for a performer of Chopin is to strike a balance between romance and rigor. When Ohlsson was a student, his teacher Rosina Lhévinne, then the most famous piano teacher in the world, and best known for her success with Van Cliburn, said to him, "My dear, mostly there aren't Chopin players these days. How did this happen to you?" She meant it as a compliment, but Ohlsson was clearly going against current taste; since then he has wrestled with the problems of illuminating the form of each piece without being "merely structural." In the sixties young musicians, reacting to the perceived romantic excesses of earlier generations of pianists, were expected to be faithful to the score, eschewing the incrustations

of tradition in favor of an intellectually rigorous approach true to the period of each composer. "Everything had to be scrubbed clean as a whistle," Ohlsson recalls. It's a movement Ohlsson feels part of, yet he believes that with Chopin "you can't merely be reverent and observant"—the music is too rich, the scores too spare in instructions. To demonstrate the point, at his lecture Ohlsson played the op. 55, no. 2 nocturne "stressfully," bringing out each "nook and cranny" of the composer's structural skill. The results seemed glaring and harsh, un-Chopinlike.

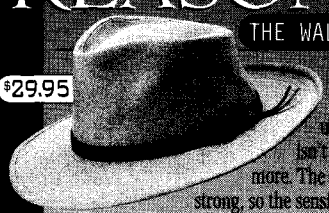
Later he asked me, "If you do try to show all the beauties Chopin writes into a score, what do you do when the right hand has a decrescendo, the left hand has a crescendo, there's a staccato note in the right hand, and there's a pedal marking and it says legato? How do you do all that?" Ohlsson calls Chopin "a laboratory for myself," a kind of self-administered Rorschach in which he can test how he is feeling about music, the piano, and himself. "I can open a Chopin nocturne I have recorded twice and have played a hundred times and think, I don't know how this sounds. Chopin writes so much into his music that you don't know what to do with it. He is so responsive to so many different approaches."

When Ohlsson was a student, the playing of Chopin was dominated by two great living figures, Rubinstein and Vladimir Horowitz. On the one hand was Rubinstein's "sane, healthy, structural, gorgeous, generous, un-neurotic Chopin," on the other "the nocturnal, feverish, irrational, technically exciting and electric approach of Horowitz." Ohlsson's idea was to reconcile the two. Later, having heard Rachmaninoff, Ignaz Friedman, Josef Hofmann, Josef Lhévinne, and Moriz Rosenthal play Chopin, he realized that there were more possibilities.

Ohlsson approaches Chopin with what has been called his "big, brilliant American" technique and with his own ideas. So far there are seven installments in his Chopin cycle for Arabesque, and they are full of surprises. Listening to him play Chopin's nocturnes, I was struck by the warmth of tone he gets from his Bösendorfer and by his detailed manner of shading the volume of

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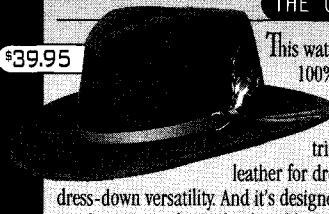
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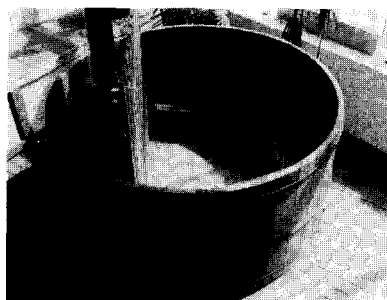
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his phrases. His pacing is broad and expansive; the pieces are kept afloat by his control over the intensity of each note and by his patient revelation of each piece's emotional life and structure. The results are unaffected, natural, big-toned but not inflated—an exquisite blend of the intimate and the grand. Ohlsson can be emphatic, as in the Ballade in F (Arabesque Z6630), on which he brings out the drama and even the seeming disjunctions. He plays the ballade's peaceful beginning so innocently that one would never anticipate the shattering effects to come; the performance is almost brutal. Not so the waltzes (Arabesque Z6669), which swing delightfully and unaffectedly, demonstrating Ohlsson's charm, warm tone, and fluent technique.

**T**O the surprise of his peers, Ohlsson continued to study long after he had an international career. His intellectual interests along with occasional pianistic difficulties carried him to various masters. One was the eccentric Irma Wolpe, the widow of the composer Stefan Wolpe, who taught at the New England Conservatory. Ohlsson met her when, at the age of twenty-six, he was giving a master class on Chopin's A-flat Ballade. A woman in the audience asked a question that Ohlsson answered mechanically. Rising from her seat, she told him he was all wrong and pushed the student off the piano bench to show what she meant about the combination of pedaling and phrasing. Rather than being offended, Ohlsson was intrigued by her playing. "I heard a kind of pianism that I had previously encountered only off of seventy-eight records from people like Hofmann and Friedman," he told me.

Wolpe helped to remake Ohlsson's technique. She also introduced him to her ideas about the Classical style. As music developed in the later nineteenth century, the musical line became longer and more expansive. Romantic pianists tended to play Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn as if they were Brahms or even Chopin. Wolpe thought that the long-lined approach "tended to ignore the sophistication of the internal workings of these phrases," Ohlsson told me. "She was fond of taking out a book of eighteenth-century architecture. She'd say,

'Look at how they used to finish corners and doors, with all these little curlicues—very refined, but very busy. It never obscures the main purpose, but it's highly articulated.' She complained about one famous modern pianist's Beethoven, saying it was like Formica—smooth, technological, twentieth-century. Beethoven wasn't smooth; Beethoven was highly articulated. She insisted on the speaking quality that had to do with articulation and the lengths of notes—very like what the early-music types are talking about today."

Ohlsson has had only one musical hang-up in his life: Mozart, whom Artur Schnabel once described as too easy for amateurs and too difficult for professionals. Ohlsson was taught early that one needed a vast amount of cultural baggage to understand Mozart: a childhood teacher denounced his pupil and American musicians in general by saying, "You don't even know what a minuet is." Later Ohlsson felt that his grand, virtuoso technique was not "germane" to the Mozart style. He spent years studying Mozart with Wolpe, and had what he considers a breakthrough when he performed Mozart's Piano Concerto K.271 at the Mostly Mozart Festival. Now he performs about a dozen Mozart concertos, though he hasn't yet recorded a note of one.

Ohlsson has, however, started what looks like the beginnings of a Beethoven cycle, having recorded two discs. His Beethoven is hardly what one would expect from a Chopin expert: it sounds planned, even if sometimes explosive. His Haydn (Arabesque Z6625) is a revelation: vivacious and in the witty, intelligent spirit of the great Viennese composer. He is particularly proud of his Haydn disc, but it has received little attention. Ohlsson has a whole shelf of recordings, he says, that remain obscure, including some of his twentieth-century recordings: his world-premiere recording of the Charles Wuorinen Piano Concerto, his Stefan Wolpe chamber works. He is naturally pleased with the attention his Busoni recording (Telarc CD-80207) received and his Chopin is receiving; and he has big plans for the near future—more Beethoven, more twentieth-century works. "There's lots of repertory left," he told me with glee. Among other things, there's Mozart. ♪



## A Cartoon Elite

*The voguish idea that America is run by a small group of brainy people is a wild exaggeration, but it has its political uses*

by Nicholas Lemann

**P**OPULISTS used to hate the rich, but now they hate the elite. This shift has made possible the migration of populism from the Democratic to the Republican Party. At this year's Republican convention the elite took it on the chin in the acceptance speeches of both Jack Kemp ("They think they know better than the people") and Bob Dole ("Within the Clinton Administration [is] a corps of the elite who . . . never did anything real"). The conservative notion of the elite has some internal variations—Dan Quayle's "cultural elite" isn't quite the same as Newt Gingrich's "corrupt elite." But at its core the notion is descended from two books published in the late 1950s by left-wing politicians on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean: Michael Young's *The Rise of the Meritocracy* and Milovan Djilas's *The New Class*.

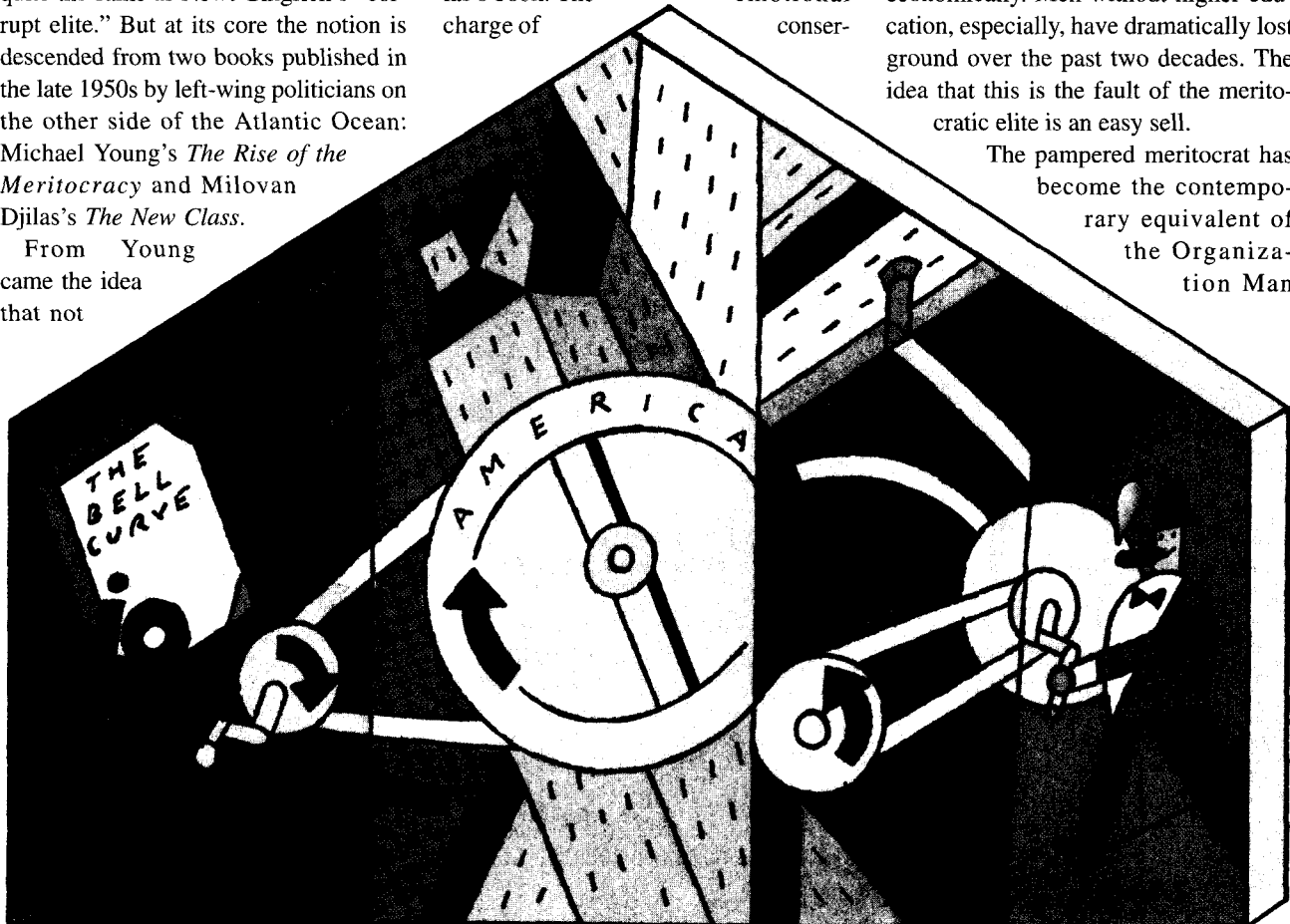
From Young came the idea that not

long after a society institutes mass educational sorting based on the results of IQ tests, a distinct high-IQ ruling class will begin to emerge. Because of the tendency of people in this class to marry fellow students at highly selective universities and pass on their IQ-rich genes to their offspring, over time the meritocratic upper class will more and more resemble a hereditary aristocracy. If this class absorbs the left-wing views that prevail in the universities, then once it is in power, it will resemble the arrogant Communist bureaucracy that was the subject of Djilas's book. The charge of emotional conser-

vative attacks on organizations like the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Endowment for the Arts, and on more-amorphous institutions like the news media, Hollywood, and the Washington establishment, comes from the idea that they are made up of superior-feeling, isolated New Class members who want to force their cultural mores on ordinary folks whom they despise.

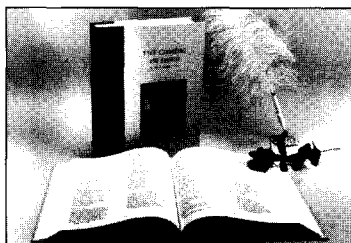
Populism usually arises from a general discontent that precedes the identification of a specific villain. People feel that things are out of control, socially and economically. Men without higher education, especially, have dramatically lost ground over the past two decades. The idea that this is the fault of the meritocratic elite is an easy sell.

The pampered meritocrat has become the contemporary equivalent of the Organization Man



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amateur poets in  
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The National Library of Poetry publishes the work of amateur poets in colorful hardbound anthologies like *The Coming of Dawn*, pictured above. Each volume features poetry by a diverse mix of poets from all over the world.

Owings Mills, Maryland – The National Library of Poetry has just announced that \$48,000.00 in prizes will be awarded over the next 12 months in the North American Open Amateur Poetry Contest. The contest is open to everyone and entry is free.

"We're especially looking for poems from new or unpublished poets," indicated Howard Ely, spokesperson for The National Library of Poetry. "We have a ten year history of awarding large prizes to talented poets who have never before won any type of writing competition."

## How To Enter

Anyone may enter the competition simply by sending in **ONLY ONE** original poem, any subject, any style, to:

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Suite 1497  
1 Poetry Plaza  
Owings Mills, MD 21117-6282

The poem should be no more than 20 lines, and the poet's name and address must appear on the top of the page. "All poets who enter will receive a response concerning their artistry, usually within seven weeks," indicated Mr. Ely.

## Possible Publication

Many submitted poems will also be considered for inclusion in one of The National Library of Poetry's forthcoming hardbound anthologies. Previous anthologies published by the organization have included *On the Threshold of a Dream*, *Days of Future's Past*, *Of Diamonds and Rust*, and *Moments More to Go*, among others.

"Our anthologies routinely sell out because they are truly enjoyable reading, and they are also a sought-after sourcebook for poetic talent," added Mr. Ely.

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of the 1950s—a symbol of the age for purposes of middlebrow hand-wringing. A typical description of the type comes from an article by Michael Lind in *Harper's Magazine*.

The closer you come to the centers of American politics and society, the more everyone begins to look the same. . . . the people who run big business bear a remarkable resemblance to the people who run big labor, who in turn might be mistaken for the people in charge of the media and the universities. *They are the same people.* . . . most of the members of the American elites went to one of a dozen Ivy League colleges or top state universities. . . . They talk the same. They walk the same.

Christopher Lasch's last book, *The Revolt of the Elites* (published posthumously), limns the meritocratic elite—which he called "the new aristocracy of brains," or "the knowledge class"—but in a much more venomous way. In his previous book, *The True and Only Heaven* (1991), Lasch presented himself as the champion of a provincial lower-middle-class culture in which the highest good is community, not the fulfillment of ambition, and identified with a "petty bourgeoisie" of "small proprietors, artisans, tradesmen, and farmers," which he admired for "its moral realism, its understanding that everything has its price, its respect for limits, its skepticism about progress." In *The Revolt of the Elites* he did not change this position at all, but he directed his energies toward damning the people he disliked rather than praising the ones he admired. Also, although all of Lasch's books have a patchwork quality, *The Revolt of the Elites* especially does: it is a slim collection of reworked articles, and so careers from subject to subject. This, along with the strength of his animus toward his subjects, means that Lasch never patiently laid out a theory of who the members of the elite are and where they came from.

It's easy, though, to extract a picture of them from the book. They have a "growing insularity," they inhabit "an artificial world," they spend too much time talking, exercising, and going to restaurants, they are excessively mobile—"at home only in transit, en route to a high-level conference, to the grand opening of a

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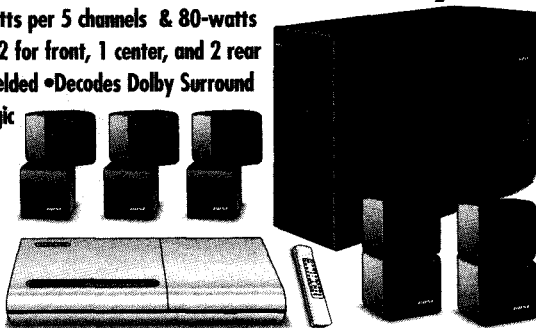
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new franchise, to an international film festival, or to an undiscovered resort"—and some partake of a sob-sisterish brand of social-issue liberalism,

a liberalism obsessed with the rights of women and minorities, with gay rights and unlimited abortion rights, with the allegedly epidemic spread of child abuse and sexual harassment, with the need for regulations against offensive speech, and with curricular reforms designed to end the cultural hegemony of "dead white European males."

The implication is that American life can be understood as a grand struggle between these people and the petit bourgeoisie: everything that helps the former hurts the latter. For example, "feminism's appeal to the professional and managerial class" is simply that it "provides the indispensable basis of their prosperous, glamorous, gaudy, sometimes indecently lavish way of life." Meanwhile, in the lower-middle class feminism doesn't bring gaudiness, but it does mean that the children wind up parked in front of the television set. The elite gets richer, and ordinary people lose ground economically. The elite migrates, and ordinary people remain in their deteriorating neighborhoods. The elite promotes cosmopolitanism, and ordinary people feel their steady, traditional, provincial civic life slipping away.

**T**HE idea that America is run by a sophisticated, brainy, culturally liberal group for whom education is the route to success is quite new. Most twentieth-century depictions of the elite treat it as being made up of conservative, vulgar, rich businessmen (and their heirs), whose salient characteristic is ruthless aggressiveness, not academic intelligence. Even as recent a novel about the elite as Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987) hasn't a trace of the idea of a meritocratic New Class sitting atop society. (Remember Larry Kramer, the smart liberal lawyer with the too-small apartment?) Where did it come from so suddenly?

The origin can't be precisely pinned down—it's part agitprop; part Robert B. Reich's influential book about the importance of "symbolic analysts," *The Work of Nations* (1991); part the ascent of super-meritocrats Bill and Hillary Clinton to the White House. The most

coherent theory of the rise of the meritocratic elite can be found not in Lasch (he's too scattered) but in Richard J. Herrnstein (also now deceased) and Charles Murray's *The Bell Curve* (1994), which, in addition to the controversial material on race and IQ, contains a long, little-commented-on section delineating the rise of the meritocratic elite. Because it is difficult to evaluate a phenomenon that has not been precisely defined, the Herrnstein-Murray argument is worth laying out.

Until the midpoint of the twentieth century, Herrnstein and Murray say, people of high intelligence were scattered more or less randomly through the social structure. But during the 1950s a distinct "cognitive elite" began to emerge, because the highly intelligent embarked on an "invisible migration" to top universities and thence to positions of power. This happened because American society had become so technologically complex that it could no longer operate without a high-IQ leadership: "A true cognitive elite requires a technological society." The new elite's rise represents a dramatic change: "Cognitive stratification as a central social process is something genuinely new under the sun." Today, with the cognitive elite controlling so much of the economic apparatus—and no wonder, because "intelligence is fundamentally related to productivity"—we are seeing take shape "an unprecedented coalition of the smart and the rich."

To people who have been through the kind of cognitive-elite life trajectory that Herrnstein and Murray describe—straight As, high SAT scores, admission to a selective college and graduate school, and off to the races—the story makes intuitive sense. It fits Herrnstein and Murray personally; both came from obscure backgrounds to Harvard (college in Murray's case, graduate school in Herrnstein's) during its meritocratizing period. In the old days the Ivy League colleges and the institutions into which they fed—upper academia, Wall Street, big law firms, research hospitals—had a distinctly clubby, Episcopalian cast; they were filled with the kind of person Calvin Trillin (Yale '57) refers to as Thatcher Baxter Hatcher. Now they're run by people who feel they have earned rather than inherited their high positions. If you're at, say, McKinsey & Company,

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surrounded by people with personal histories similar to your own, the temptation to accept the cognitive-elite theory at face value is nearly overwhelming.

However, the theory has two major shortcomings: the relative unintelligence of all preceding elites is impossible to prove, and the degree to which the upper-income stratum is now made up of people with high IQs and prestigious educations is exaggerated. These are not just dry conceptual problems. They have distinct political consequences.

The idea that intelligence used to be randomly distributed across the class structure is problematic for Herrnstein and Murray. They contend that what IQ tests measure is general intelligence, or *g* in the impressive-sounding shorthand—the most important human talent, which would have been found at above-average levels even among “the chief ministers in Cheops’ Egypt.” If you take this argument too far, you wind up saying that there was always a cognitive elite. How could it have failed to emerge earlier, if *g* is crucial? Herrnstein and Murray’s answer is that only a technological society can coax a true cognitive elite into existence. But society has been becoming steadily more technological for centuries, so shouldn’t the cognitive elite have taken form gradually over time, rather than overnight in the 1950s?

**A** MORE concrete difficulty in establishing the emergence of the cognitive elite is that reliable statistics on the distribution of intelligence before 1950 are hard to come by. The first mass-administered mental tests were the Army Alpha and Beta for military recruits during the First World War, which Herrnstein and Murray mention only in passing. The results of those tests would seem to contradict their view that the cognitive elite didn’t emerge until after the Second World War: the Army tests showed that officers were markedly more intelligent than enlisted men.

Herrnstein and Murray say that the mechanism for the creation of the cognitive elite was higher education. In *The Bell Curve* persuasive charts show people high in IQ becoming more likely to go to college over time and also bunching up in the elite colleges, but the underlying data are weak. For example, Herrnstein and Murray’s figures on the

(relatively low) average IQ scores at Ivy League schools in 1930, when pursued through the footnotes, seem to come from the first administration of the Scholastic Aptitude Test, to 8,040 students on June 23, 1926, and the subsequent conversion of SAT scores to IQs. The takers were not students at Ivy League colleges; they were high school students. What Herrnstein and Murray report as the average IQ of graduates of the Ivy League and Seven Sisters colleges appears actually to be an average of the SAT scores of high school students who told the test administrators they’d like their scores sent to these colleges.

By far the best statistical support for the idea of the scattered nature of the cognitive elite prior to the Second World War comes from the Pennsylvania Study, a large research effort conducted in the 1920s and 1930s by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Ambitious as it was, the Pennsylvania Study was not universally accepted in testing circles, because its authors, William S. Learned and Ben D. Wood, were throughout the period of their research active proselytizers for the use of educational admissions tests to separate the cognitive wheat and chaff. Carl Brigham, the creator of the SAT, wrote to James Bryant Conant, the president of Harvard, in 1938,

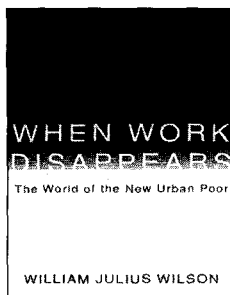
Dr. Learned and I long ago agreed to disagree on the results of this Pennsylvania Study. . . . He finally agreed that his conclusions could not be justified from his data, yet he insisted that the conclusions were good propaganda for the educational world and he has continued to preach them. . . . Dr. Learned feels that certain desirable social results may be obtained even though the methods of obtaining them are wrong.

An alternate explanation for the emergence of the cognitive elite would be that the key variable was not so much the personnel demands of a technological society as the development and promotion of mental tests. Probably before there were mental tests the intelligent were overrepresented at the upper end of the social structure; the advent of testing—not technological change—made the fit tighter in certain professions. As soon as mental tests are used as a screen for entry into a field, by ironclad tautol-

ogy that field will be dominated by people who score high on mental tests. With typical assurance Herrnstein and Murray report that “only people from a fairly narrow range of cognitive ability can become lawyers,” but to the extent that that is true, it’s because a cognitive measure, the Law School Aptitude Test, is the tollbooth through which all aspiring lawyers must pass, not because you have to be intellectually gifted to draw up wills and deeds of sale.

**H**ERRNSTEIN and Murray claim that business, especially the corporate world, fits their model: formerly run by people who had the right connections and may or may not have been very bright, today it is controlled by the cognitive elite. Their evidence is pretty light. As at other key junctures in their argument, they depart from their statistics-wielding men-in-white-coats stance and simply present bold assertions as true. (My favorite of these is “Intermarriage among people in the top few percentiles of intelligence may be increasing far more rapidly than suspected”—no footnote.) About the business elite they say, “Both common sense and circumstantial evidence suggest that people who rise to the upper echelons of large businesses tend to have high IQs and that this tendency has increased during the course of the century.” To back this up they cite a 1976 article in *Fortune* saying that 40 percent of the chief executive officers of the top 500 corporations had a background “in finance or law, fields of study that are highly screened for intelligence.”

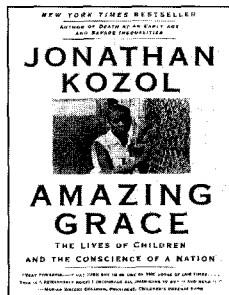
A much more recent and comprehensive source is *Forbes*’s annual survey of the chief executives of the 800 largest corporations, which lists their higher-education credentials. By now most of these executives are people who went to college in the 1950s and 1960s—that is, during what Herrnstein and Murray identify as the beginning of the meritocratic era. The *Forbes* survey supports *The Bell Curve* to some extent but presents a much more nuanced picture. The college that provided the most CEOs is cognitively screened Harvard, with twenty-three, and Cornell and Princeton are second, with eighteen each. It must be said, however, that only a couple of the CEOs from these schools have ethnic-sounding names, and some of them



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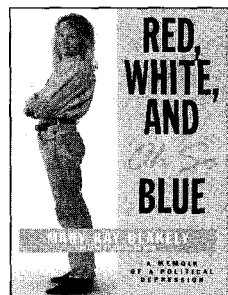
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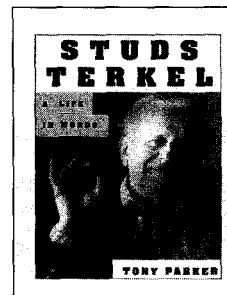
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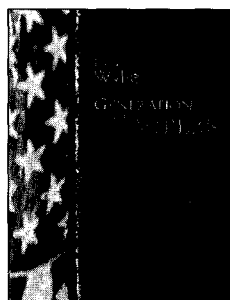
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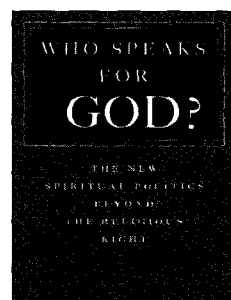
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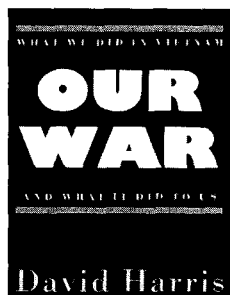
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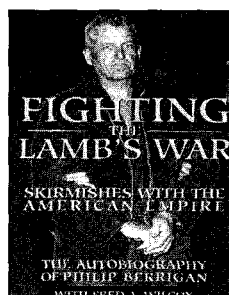
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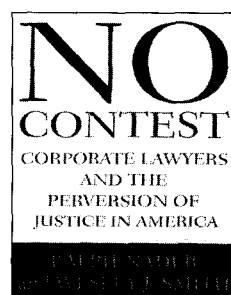
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## Those "West Bank" Settlements Are they really the "greatest obstacle to peace?"

In the context of the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians that have now been going on for almost three years, it is often asserted that the Israeli towns and villages (usually and with some derogation referred to as "settlements") in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") are possibly the most serious obstacle to peace. That has been and is being repeated so often that many have come to accept it as truth.

### What are the facts?

**A recap of history.** Some thumb-nail history may be in order. Large numbers of Jews have been living in these territories since biblical times. Most of the Arabs living there are in fact relative newcomers. "Palestine" is the entire area now covered by Israel including Judea/Samaria (the so-called "West Bank") and what is now the Kingdom of Jordan. It originally also included the Golan Heights, which later, in an agreement between England and France, were ceded to France, and to Syria as the successor in possession.

In 1922, contrary to the Mandate of the League of Nations, the British severed the entire area east of the Jordan and gave it to the Hashemite Arabs for their assistance in World War I. Thus, fully 75% of Palestine, all of which under the Mandate and under the terms of the Balfour Declaration was meant to be a home for the Jewish people, was lost for that purpose. Only the area west of the Jordan River was left for the Jewish settlement.

**How the West Bank became "Arab country."** In 1947, after decades of strife between Arabs and Jews, the British decided to relinquish the Mandate. The UN stepped in and proposed a partition plan under which the country (west of the River) was to be divided into respective Arab and Jewish areas. Jerusalem was to be internationalized. The Jews accepted the plan; the Arabs refused it out of hand. In 1948, on the twice truncated territory

allotted to them by the U.N., the Jews declared their independence and the state of Israel was born. On the same day, six Arab armies invaded the new-born state. In what can be described as an almost biblical miracle, the Jews defeated them. When an armistice was finally secured, however, TransJordan remained in possession of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and the eastern part of Jerusalem; Egypt remained in possession of the Gaza Strip. TransJordan renamed itself Jordan.

**The Six-Day War.** Once in possession of the "West Bank" and East Jerusalem, the Jordanians promptly pro-

**"Why should the Arab countries and the 'West Bank' be the only places in the world where Jews are not allowed to live?"**

ceeded to expel all Jews and systematically to desecrate and to destroy most Jewish sacred places, cemeteries and houses of worship. No Jews, regardless of citizenship were allowed into the "West Bank" or East Jerusalem, the locale of the Western Wall, the holiest site in Judaism. In 1967, Egyptian president Abdel Nasser, joined by the same array of Arab armies that had unsuccessfully tried to destroy Israel at its birth in 1948, launched another war against Israel "to drive the Jews into the sea" and into oblivion, once and for all. But the Israelis utterly defeated the combined Arab might in the Six-Day War, one of the greatest military victories in history. When the dust of war settled, the Israelis had not only retained their national territory, but had repossessed the territories of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), the eastern part of Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and had totally occupied Egypt's vast Sinai Peninsula.

It is clear from this abbreviated history that the Israeli claim to the "West Bank" is far stronger than that of the Arabs. About 200,000 Jews now live there. And why shouldn't they? Why should the Arab countries and the "West Bank" be the only places in the whole wide world where Jews are not allowed to live? How can 200,000 Jews living among one million Arabs be the "greatest threat to peace"? Why should anybody be concerned about a new settlement of a few mobile homes on some barren Judean hills as the "greatest threat to peace," when we seem to be oblivious and totally unconcerned about the unrelenting hostility of the Arab countries, the de facto incorporation of Lebanon by Syria, the Scuds and the chemical weapons still remaining in Iraq, and the relentless and ominous build-up of Syria's missile forces?

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leap out as belonging to the boss's-son rather than the cognitive-elite category, such as John Hess, of Amerada Hess, Harvard '75. Schools with much less cognitive screening are also important suppliers of CEOs, though: the University of Wisconsin (thirteen CEOs, 69 percent of applicants accepted), Purdue (ten CEOs, 90 percent), the University of Michigan (ten CEOs, 69 percent), and Vanderbilt (eight CEOs, 58 percent).

Herrnstein and Murray say that because college graduates on average have above-average IQs (they cite as proof an estimate from twenty-four years ago), because most business executives have college degrees, and because they have risen through the ranks in their companies, "in the neighborhood of 70 to 80 percent" of those in the ranks of management might have IQs of over 120. But of the 2,000 four-year colleges and universities in the United States, only sixty-six do not accept a majority of their applicants. The cognitive screening for a bachelor's degree is so much less severe than the financial screening for one that the proposition that college graduates are likely to come from comfortable backgrounds is much easier to support than the proposition that they are likely to be highly intelligent.

Sketchy estimates of the dimension of the new elite usually put it at about 20 percent of the population—the "fortunate fifth," Reich has called it. It's impossible to get to any number this big—about 50 million people—without going far outside the bounds of the elite as it is usually described. Just a cursory glance at the statistics demonstrates that the top fifth of the income distribution is made up mostly of people who didn't attend highly selective universities and aren't politically liberal.

Every year the Internal Revenue Service publishes a booklet called *Individual Income Tax Returns*; the most recent one available covers 1992. The number of tax returns in 1992 that reported income of \$100,000 or more was 3.8 million. It's hard to think of people who make less than \$100,000 as members of "the elite," but returns reporting \$100,000 and above represent only three percent of returns. To get an elite of more than 10 percent of tax filers, you have to drop down to an income level of \$60,000 a year. (It is true that you get a much high-

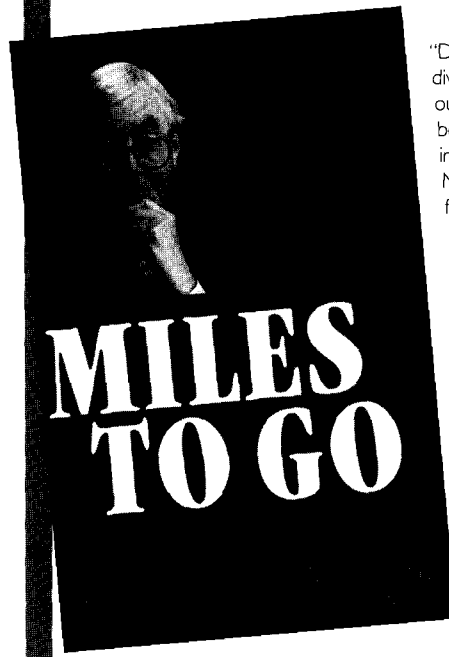


er income for the "fortunate fifth" if you look at households rather than individual tax filers—according to the Census Bureau, the mean income of the top fifth of households in 1992 was \$91,110, no doubt because many of these households have two workers. Even this number, though, wouldn't put most top-fifth families into the familiar plummy picture of private school, gated residential community, and vacation home on Martha's Vineyard.) There are more than 23 million Americans with bachelor's degrees, and 12.7 million Americans between the ages of twenty-five and sixty-four, according to Herrnstein and Murray, are in the top IQ decile—so the overwhelming majority of both groups must not belong to the over-\$100,000 economic elite. In other words, there are a lot of highly educated and intelligent people who aren't especially affluent.

Also, as income rises above \$100,000, the percentage of it that is derived from "salaries and wages" and "business or profession" declines, and the percentage derived from long-term capital gains steadily increases—which hints at an upper end of the economic elite made up of inheritors, big-time entrepreneurs, and financiers, not high-IQ professionals. In other words, perhaps there are also still a lot of rich people who don't have high IQs and prestigious degrees. Finally, a consistent finding of polls is that the more money you make, the more likely you are to vote Republican. So there are a lot of elite people who aren't liberal either. The one public-opinion finding that supports the idea of a liberal elite is that more people with graduate degrees vote Democratic than do people with only bachelor's degrees.

**C**LEARLY a group of Americans exists that is affluent, highly educated, professional, and liberal. But the extent to which this group and "the elite," defined economically, are the same has been wildly exaggerated by people who have spent their lives in the liberal-professional subgroup. Most books about the elite make it sound like a clonally enlarged version of the population of the rarefied enclaves where the authors live: Manhattan, Cambridge, Palo Alto, and Washington, D.C., west of Rock Creek Park. It would be easier to make the case that the American elite is composed

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mainly of Republican businessmen and their families, some of whom were put on the road to the top by fortunate college and graduate-school admissions and some not, and that places like Buckhead and Irvine and North Dallas and Rye are in fact much more representative of the American elite.

Even if what was considered the meritocratic elite was trimmed back from a fifth to, say, a hundredth of the population, there would still be a big problem with the cognitive-elite theory, arising from the sociology of its members. Let's say that Herrnstein and Murray are right that the most selective colleges today efficiently "soak up" a majority of the American adolescents with the highest IQs, and that these students are plainly the most able members of their age cohort. Ever since the meritocratic apparatus in the United States became mature, around 1970, the undergraduate atmosphere in Ivy League colleges has been one of intense anxiety about pursuing careers outside those professions that follow from a law or medicine degree or an MBA (which for the best students generally leads to management consulting or investment banking and not, as Herrnstein and Murray imply, to corporate management). Because these fields are tightly screened on the basis of test scores and grades, they present the lowest-risk career options to people who have very high test scores and grades. One enters them as part of an extremely limited pool of people, most of whom are virtually guaranteed high incomes.

In fields that aren't so tightly screened—from entrepreneurship to show business to corporate management—the odds are much longer for members of the cognitive elite than they are in the professions. The stampede into the professions, driven by risk aversion, is the subject of many hand-wringing commencement speeches (and, years later, of the students' middle-aged longueurs). It would even be possible to take the perverse position that people with high IQs have become less powerful in recent decades, because they are so firmly channeled into advisory roles in the professions. This is why the Ross Perots and David Geffens of the world don't find themselves competing with many anointed members of the cognitive elite during their rise into the economic elite.

In his *In an Age of Experts*, Steven Brint sets out to create a more precise taxonomy of the professional classes than is available in the books that sweepingly assert the presence of a unitary new elite. Although Brint attempts to prove his points with somewhat woolly efforts at quantifying, such as enlisting a squadron of research assistants to code articles from sixteen publications numerically on each of a hundred variables, most of what he says has the ring of common sense. His main theory is that professionals are differentiated in ways that mirror wider divisions in the society. Professionals in "business services" (corporate lawyers, for example) and "applied science" (engineers) tend to be well-off and conservative. Professionals in "human services" (social workers, schoolteachers) are more liberal but most of them can't plausibly be presented as part of an economic elite. Professionals in "consultative" jobs are more liberal than those in "command-oriented" jobs. To the extent that there is a liberal strain among professionals in general, it is found in their positions on social rather than economic issues. To the extent that there is a New Class, it is found not here but in Western Europe, where there is a tradition of elite university graduates becoming career government officials.

IT may be too much to hope that the prevailing intellectual view of ordinary American life will ever be accurate and nonprojective; certainly the voluminous warnings about "conformity" during the 1950s now seem merely quaint. But the cartoon version of the all-powerful meritocratic elite which has recently emerged has the special disadvantage of serving to distract the country from responding to its real problems. Income inequality is growing. The economic condition of much of the work force is stagnant or deteriorating. Most Americans don't feel themselves to be part of a political and economic system that they can believe in and that serves their needs. To lay all this at the feet of a high-IQ upper class that is supposedly feasting on the corpse of the social compact doesn't much help anybody but the Republican Party, which has learned to fulminate lustily on behalf of the little guy even though its base lies among the well-to-do. ☞

# Remembering Ross Thomas

*He made crime  
fiction a genre of moral  
consolation in twenty-five  
award-winning books*

by Tony Hiss

**R**OSS Thomas, who died last winter at the age of sixty-nine, has often been compared to another writer of hard-boiled fiction—Raymond Chandler. Both were spellbinding storytellers; no matter how fast one galloped through their books, one read the last chapter at a crawl, in order to delay its end (“Can’t put it down” also means “Try to make it last”). And they had similar turning points, since each first started publishing fiction around the age of forty. Both Thomas and Chandler had more than just high hopes going for them when they began coming up with tales, because they brought with them half a lifetime’s worth of triumphs, misfortunes, magical transformations, and mortifying mistakes—or raw material, as Somerset Maugham used to call what leads to the slow accumulation of understanding.

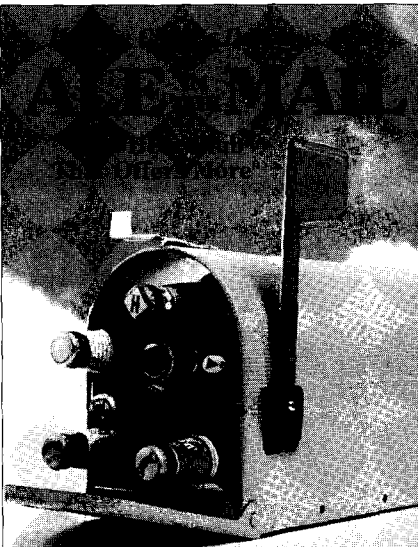
Chandler, a generation older than Thomas, fought with the Canadian Corps and later served in the Royal Air Force during the First World War. He became a banker for a while and then a successful oil-company executive. Thomas began his adult life as a U.S. infantryman in the Philippines during the Second World War, and after that was very busy jumping into and out of several promising careers. He was a reporter (in Cajun country, in Bonn, and in Washington) and a public-relations man (first for the National Farmers Union and later for VISTA), and he made something of a name for himself as a political mastermind. He was the chief strategist for two aging union presidents seeking re-election, guided a tribal chief who was trying to become Nigeria’s first postcolonial Prime Minister, and in 1956 handled two campaigns simultaneously—one for a Re-

publican nominated for the Senate and the other for a Democrat running for governor of Colorado. (Both union presidents were eventually turned out of office; the Nigerian lost big and was thrown into jail; the Republican didn’t make it; the Democrat won.) Thomas’s PR work culminated in *Warriors for the Poor: The Story of VISTA*, his only nonfiction book, which he co-wrote.

Chandler turned to fiction because he was broke; it was the early 1930s, and he’d lost his job with the oil company. When he began writing, he put himself through a laborious five-year apprenticeship, turning out dozens of short pieces for dime detective magazines before he got the flippancy and the Anglicisms out of his tone and was ready to write five beautiful crime novels that today are studied in college literature courses.

Many people now revere Chandler as a writer who spoke for the soul of Los Angeles, finding in his work almost the same intensity of feeling for a place achieved by the great naturalists in theirs—John Muir writing about the Sierra Nevada, for instance, or Thoreau about the Maine woods. But when I come back to Chandler, it’s to listen to a lyrical, tender, passionate voice calling out from his time and his America to ours, reminding us that not so very long ago, during the late-New Deal, early-Second World War years, this was a country that looked its problems in the eye and thought it knew enough about human nature not to get suckered by grifters, schemers, con men, and backstabbers. Maybe those were the last years of a kind of battered innocence, the final moment when it seemed as if fellow feeling and good will, teamwork and sweetness of character, were strong enough to stand up to anything, and were all we needed to get the whole country back in balance.

Ross Thomas, in his crime novels, wrote about the successors to that moment, the post-Chandler Americans—as he saw us, we have for fifty years been thrown hopelessly off balance by what the end of the Second World War brought our way: sudden power, instant dread that this power might be grabbed away at any moment, and widespread prosperity that lingered so long it started to feel permanent. Like one of his most memorable characters, Homer Necessary, whose ambivalent attitude toward life is epit-



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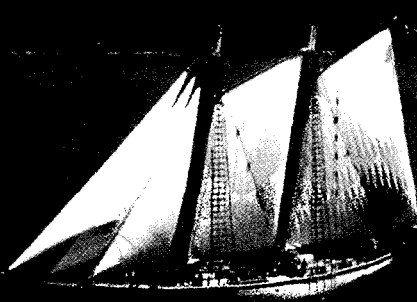
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mized by his having one blue eye and one brown eye (he's an utterly corrupt, but in his personal life completely trustworthy, ex-police chief who speeds the action along in an early Thomas classic, *The Fools in Town Are on Our Side*), Thomas has two overlapping views about the Cold War years and their aftermath. With so much for us to be greedy for or frightened about, as he repeatedly showed, the last half century has had a devastatingly corrosive effect on American public life. At the same time, with all the outsized rogues and cunning intriguers this period has so lavishly given rise to, it's been a storyteller's paradise.

This fusion of dismay and delight, I think, gives Thomas's books a tang that's often missing in other Cold War tales, even those by writers as gifted and as compelling as Ian Fleming and John le Carré. Fleming's James Bond books, idealized retellings of the doings of his former colleagues in British intelligence, are high-spirited, enticing, and inventive, but at the same time almost relentlessly congratulatory, with none of the sly self-mockery that the actor Sean Connery later contributed. In retrospect they seem a bit forlorn, like the brass bands that played during the early months of the First World War. Le Carré, who eclipsed Fleming in popularity during the second and more somber half of the Cold War, is a writer of real stature whose English secret-service heroes wrestle with real and lasting demons like self-doubt and loneliness, as well as with adversaries who themselves have been crippled by the pointlessness of it all.

The one true meeting point I can see between Fleming and le Carré is that both seem quietly to share the idea that the postwar period could have been much improved by putting the Brits back in charge of Western strategy. Thomas, by contriving to look steadily at the pain of our times and at the people who take pleasure from it, and having little hope for wisdom in any national capital, somehow managed to make the Cold War years seem more ordinary, and therefore more endurable. So the setting for his stories is neither the innocent playground of the old Great Game, where super-powers competed for glory, nor the final tragedy of history. Instead the Cold War is just one more set of obstacles to get through, and maybe learn from.



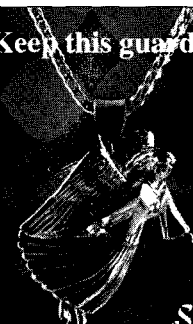
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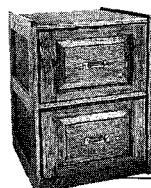
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**L**OOKING back, it's easy to see why Thomas never had to serve an apprenticeship as a fiction writer—he was already exceptionally good at writing even before he knew it was what he would do with the rest of his life. The first story he ever wrote, *The Cold War Swap*, a fast-paced, wisecracking novel about a thoroughly rotten plan cooked up by a little-known American intelligence agency that has turned crooked without even noticing it, was tossed off during six weeks when he had nothing better to do. It's still dazzling, and after it came out, in 1966, the year Thomas turned forty, it won an Edgar, the mystery writers' equivalent of the Oscar. In the twenty-nine years that followed, Thomas came up with twenty-four more novels at least as good. All the books he ever wrote (except *Warriors for the Poor*, long since remaindered) are in print today, a rare accomplishment and probably the one prize almost every professional author, deep down, would most like to achieve.

Thomas has become such a long-lasting success in part, I think, because of the unusually generous nature of his creative talent. Any Thomas novel is a feast, with plot and characters enough to fill four ordinary thrillers—in fact, one of them, *The Fools in Town*, actually reels off four wildly inventive and tightly interlocked stories all at once, and zips effortlessly back and forth among the Deep South in the late 1960s, Hong Kong in the early 1960s, Texas in the early 1950s, and Shanghai in the late 1930s. Thomas often told interviewers that he didn't know how his books would turn out when he started them, which probably explains why even in rereading them one has a sense that anything could happen.

Among his peers Thomas, who in recent years served a term as president of the Mystery Writers of America, was famous for fast-draw opening paragraphs that get right down to business. *Briarpatch*, for instance, the 1985 Edgar winner, begins,

The redheaded homicide detective stepped through the door at 7:30 A.M. and out into the August heat that already had reached 88 degrees. By noon the temperature would hit 100, and by two or three o'clock it would be hovering around 105. Frayed nerves would then start to snap and

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produce a marked increase in the detective's business. Breadknife weather, the detective thought. Breadknives in the afternoon.

Ross Thomas would probably never have described himself as Raymond Chandler's successor; Hemingway was the writer he admired most, and his own style, which may well get its terseness, artful scene setting, and uncanny skill with dialogue from Hemingway, is far more freewheeling than Chandler's. It is characterized chiefly by a kind of laconic gusto, or tight-lipped amplitude, and if that sounds hard to conjure up, try to imagine the kind of writing that might result if a Hollywood studio were able to lock Mark Twain and Dashiell Hammett in a room together and ask for a screenplay in a week's time. But Chandler and Thomas, it seems to me, however beguiling their tales, have a more basic link, because at bottom both are writers

of a special kind of self-help or fix-it book (a crossover market I'm pretty sure book publishers haven't yet tapped into).

There are actually two kinds of escape reading, and only one has to do with snuggling into a book just to take a break from your problems for a few hours. Put down a Thomas book, like a Chandler book, even on a dark night of the soul, and you're never quite back where you were before you began reading. Something, I've always found, has been subtly strengthened and enriched in the meantime. It might be a sense that you can now look awful situations in the eye without dissolving. Or merely a replenished sense that good cheer can still bubble up into the world, and that there's enough on hand for all of us to make it through another season. It's certainly the kind of feeling that again and again makes one glad that Ross Thomas found he had to take up writing. ☼

## BRIEF REVIEWS



### The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak

edited by Alan Adelson,  
translated by Kamil Turowski.  
Oxford, 288 pages, \$27.50.

Dawid Sierakowiak was fifteen years old in the summer of 1939, when he had a fine time mountain climbing at a Zionist youth camp. Within a few months Dawid and his family were confined in the Lodz ghetto, the status of his school was confused (much to his distress, for he was an avid student and ranked at the top of his class), and he was writing in his diary that "the prices of meat and lard are becoming more and more unreal. . . . It does not matter to us anyway, since we would not have enough money for these products even if they cost their regular prewar price." It was the beginning of the combination of financial strangulation and slow starvation by which the

Nazis reduced the Jews of Lodz to enfeebled slaves before shipping them off to death camps. Dawid's five surviving notebooks provide a precise record of the horror. He recorded rumors, prices, diseases, deportations, and deaths. He scrounged up tutoring jobs for which he was paid in pfennigs or, in one case, very poor soup. As an enthusiastic young Communist, he noted and resented the better conditions available to the managerial class surrounding the Nazi puppet who controlled the ghetto. He reported no acts of heroism and very few of generosity. His own father took to stealing from the family's inadequate food supply. Hunger and the search for work are constant themes, but through all the misery Dawid maintained his interest in public affairs and his intellectual ambitions. In March of 1943 he was offered a job (presumably unpaid) "translating one of Lenin's books from Yiddish to Pol-



ish," and "took it willingly." In April, despite the promise of life-sustaining work in a bakery, he admitted to "beginning to fall into melancholy." He died in August, officially of tuberculosis. The death certificate survives. Dawid's diaries are a terrifying record, all the more so because of the observant intelligence that persisted through life in a man-made hell. Mr. Adelson's notes are thorough and often indispensable for understanding what the diarist had no reason to explain.

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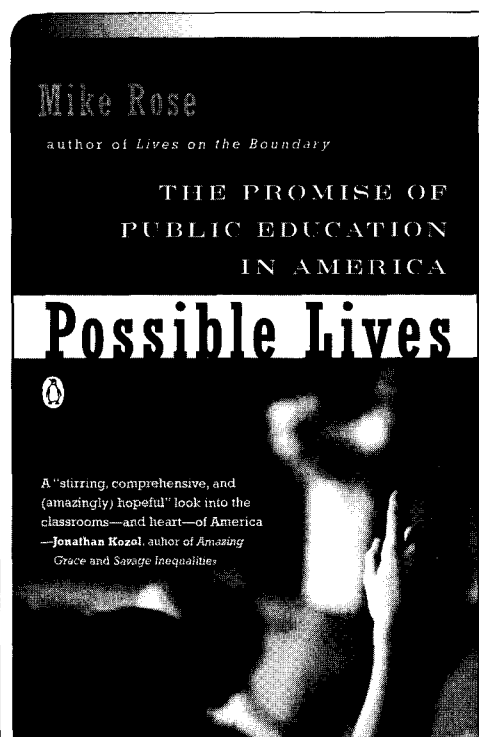
Ms. Storace's account of a year spent in Greece combines past and present, legend and fact, direct reportage and subtle reflection, in an unusual and delightful whole. Her book goes well beyond the travel genre in penetrating a country balancing resentfully between Europe and Asia, where the ghost of Alexander the Great is entangled with the "Macedonia question," the rules laid down by the European Union threaten to produce "a situation in which Greeks can't afford to live in Greece," and the inhabitants of modern buildings regularly consult dream books. This is a splendid book about a wonderfully varied and ambivalent country that does not deserve its self-invented joke: Every country has a cross to bear—England has weather, Greece has Greeks.

### Raw Creation: Outsider Art and Beyond

by John Maizels.  
Phaidon, 240 pages, \$69.95.

By the mid nineteenth century doctors who were developing humane treatment of the insane had begun to take an interest in the artwork of their patients. Their initial objective was to achieve a better understanding for therapeutic purposes, but the inescapable power of some of the productions led to appreciation and collection. Books were written, and one such fell into the hands of the artist Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985), who, already fascinated by Dada and surrealism, became an enthusiastic advocate of art derived directly from the unconscious mind—

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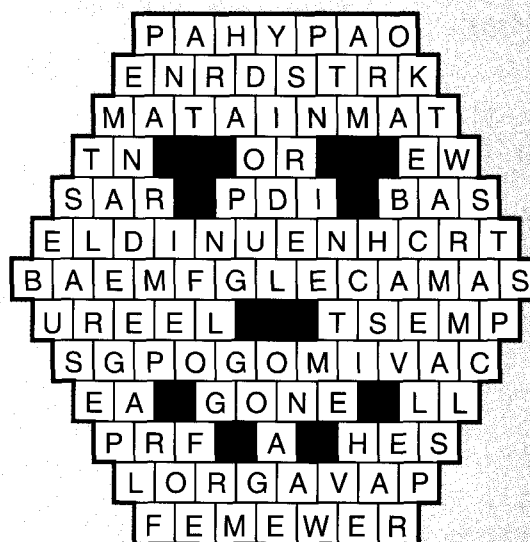
—*The New York Times*

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## ANSWERS TO THE OCTOBER PUZZLER



### Got A Match?

Unmatched letters spell JACK O' LANTERN. Clues. 1. PANE (homophone) 2. HYDRA (hidden) 3. PATS + Y 4. O + KRA (ark rev.) 5. ME(AN)T 6. T(RAJ)AN 7. INROADS (anag.) 8. MANT(R)A 9. T + WEAK 10. STALE (anag.) 11. RAN(C)ID 12. P(OD)UNK 13. IRONED (anag.) 14. BLEACH (anag.) 15. STRAW (rev.) 16. BEAU (homophone) 17. E(M)ERALD (dealer anag.) 18. FL(EM)ING 19. LEAGUE (double def.) 20. C + HASTEN 21. MACRA(M)E 22. SPAT (double def.) 23. S + URGE 24. P(EON)AGE 25. GO(O)GOL 26. ME(NOT)T + I 27. VAL(IS)E 28. CLAM + P 29. PEA(R)L 30. FOR + GER 31. A + RAG + ON 32. HEAVE + N 33. SPELL (double def.) 34. F(L)OE 35. MERGE (hidden) 36. WE(A + V)E 37. RE(A)P

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"works produced by persons unscathed by artistic culture," in which "the spirit has free rein once again." Dubuffet called such works *Art Brut*, and extended the term to include any work that was untrammelled by conventional training or orthodox academic standards. Mr. Maizels calls it *Outsider Art*, and his book presents a dazzling display of the strange, the disturbing, and the unique. Outsider artists belong to no schools, follow no fashions, submit to no influences, and invent their own techniques. Their only discernible common characteristic is a superb indifference to anything but their own vision. Mr. Maizels's factual text is accompanied by quotations that are often as amazing as the works they purport to explain. One may not enjoy every item reproduced in this book, but visual excitement and intellectual provocation are abundant.

### Difficulties of a Bridegroom

by Ted Hughes.

*Picador, 159 pages, \$20.00.*

**Mr.** Hughes, the poet laureate of England, prefaces his collection of short stories with an explanation of their origins and the years in which they were written. The satirical fantasy "O'Kelly's Angel," for example, was composed when "the troubles of Northern Ireland were dormant." It could not decently be written today. Other stories are related in various ways to Mr. Hughes's poetry, but familiarity with that poetry is not necessary for the reader to follow the patterns of eeriness and endurance that connect the tales. Those connections are loose and not necessarily advantageous.

### Remembering Anna O.: A Century of Mystification

by Mikkil Borch-Jacobsen.

*Routledge, 125 pages,  
\$14.95.*

**T**he case of Anna O., a young woman whose hysterical symptoms disappeared once she recalled and described the traumatic incident that caused them, figures large in the Freudian psychiatric method. Both Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, Anna's doctor, vouched for the spectacular cure. Mr. Borch-Jacobsen,

after ploughing through "the labyrinth of archives, purloined letters, gossip, and rumor known as Freud studies," maintains that the case is a myth and offers persuasive evidence in support of his heresy. His book is an entertaining exercise in irreverent detection, regardless of one's position on Freud.

### To the Hilt

by Dick Francis.

*Putnam, 320 pages, \$24.95.*

**A**lexander Kinloch, the narrator of Mr. Francis's latest thriller, is a chronically disheveled artist who asks only to be left unmolested on a Scottish mountain with his paints and his bagpipes. He is, however, the nephew of an earl, and although the family castle is being mismanaged by the state and no Kinloch has swung a claymore for centuries, the ancestral spirit survives. When Alexander is beset by thugs, a brewery, and dubiously legal shenanigans with a horse, he responds as to the fiery cross. The tale starts with a bang and ends with a crash, both highly satisfactory.

### A World Lost

by Wendell Berry.

*Counterpoint, 160 pages,  
\$20.00.*

**Mr.** Berry's middle-aged narrator recalls the semi-rural paradise of his childhood, shattered by a murder that haunted his family forever after. The novel is a portrayal, at once delicate and acute, of unpretentiously fine people coping with a very bad business. Mr. Berry writes elegantly, effortlessly balancing tragedy and a quiet, sly humor.

### My Other Life

by Paul Theroux.

*Houghton Mifflin, 456 pages,  
\$24.95.*

**Mr.** Theroux has developed the what-if? fantasy of another life into a novel about exactly that—his own imaginary life as a wandering literary man with a sideline in teaching and a talent for the inadvertent collection of Potiphar's wives. The episodic tale begins in an African leper colony and ends with a box of "personal effects," and it is interesting, sometimes acid, reading all the way.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams



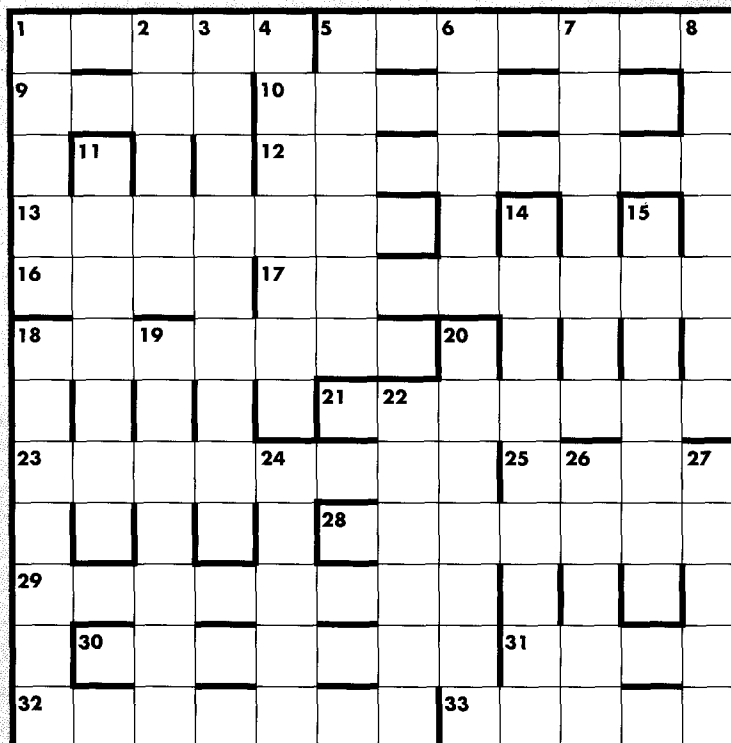
# THE PUZZLER

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

## Spoonerisms

In a spoonerism two consonant sounds in a word or phrase are transposed, creating new words. For instance, CHOPSTICKS would be STOP CHICKS, BEAN CURD would be KEEN BIRD, and BILL OF FARE would be FILL OF BEAR. Note that spelling changes appropriately in the newly formed words. In this puzzle one third of the clues (12) must have their *answers* spoonerized before entry in the diagram; another third are written with spoonerisms occurring in the *definitions* of the answers; the remaining third are normal cryptic clues. Answers include four proper nouns; 10 Across is an uncommon word made of common elements.

*The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 121.*



### Across

1. To sing jazzily, mostly with soul, for a ringer (5)
5. Kid about a favorable part of a tree (7)
9. Pest and I will elicit no voter? (4)
10. The French search for lasso around a gam (7)
12. A figure of speech about popular poison (8)
13. Junket could make Pa dirty (3,4)
16. Positive response about Ladd's initial pout in *Shane* (4)
17. Striking a jerk after shot (8)
18. Bum ferried around England's capital in a courtesy jaunt (4,4)
21. What fun led Dizzy to use flattering terms (7)
23. Hard-to-miss item for Wilder or Brando (4,4)

25. Cow of a butter farm finally following trio of steers (4)
28. Up late, Augustus pens *Hat Flight* (7)
29. Where Clark Kent gets his clothes changed wrong: in a boneyard (4,4)
30. Given toe nip, the husband of Aunt Dee embraces half of us (7)
31. Trade Max for bit of tackle and pole (4)
32. Take heed of conflict in contest (6)
33. Bow and lace in water—goodness (5)

### Down

1. Sign to favor town with a pen (5)
2. Palm Springs—ultimately blue (5)
3. Nice-looking youngster will acquire love before long (6,4)
4. A toy in a bale is a shaver with a loud sound (7)
5. Wit quirk regarding part of a car (6)
6. Dance involving a sports competition (3-2)
7. A poet: "I'd sadly die on hope" (7)
8. Sweet stuff for a class in corner (7)
11. Unknowingly reveal stake and beam (6)
14. Draw straws at last, and then lie to spouse (9)
15. Crazy about key trick (7)
18. Comic strip about a "Doctor Spawn" (4,3)
19. Device enabling you to call Cape Horn when traveling (3,5)
20. Ushers in a lobby initially surrounded by crowds (7)
22. That woman collects love lines to make a crowd lie (6)
24. Anger about blue book (5)
26. Earth in greater ranges (5)
27. Mummy making the first MD substitute for the real thing (5)

**Note:** The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.



# WORD

## IMPROVISATION

by J. E. Lighter

### Blowing Smoke

**A**FTER years on the back burner, the nation's interest in big cigars has returned with a vengeance. Sales of premium cigars had in recent decades been declining steadily; a 10 percent gain registered in 1992–1993 was the first gain at all since 1970. According to the Cigar Association of America, sales in the first half of this year were up more than 50 percent from the same period a year ago. *Cigar bars*, where smokers can companionably pass the time free of worry about anti-smoking regulations, are now becoming a fixture in many upscale urban commercial districts. *Cigarheads* even have a new magazine, a lavish, glossy two-pound package of pride and puffery called *Cigar Aficionado*. Its editor and publisher, Marvin R. Shanken, paid more than \$500,000 for John F. Kennedy's old walnut humidor (a gift from Milton Berle) when effects from the estate of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis were put up for auction last spring. Vice President Thomas Marshall in 1920 said that what this country needed was a "good five-cent cigar," but supersnob *stogies* now sell for as much as \$35 apiece (and illegal Cuban cigars can go for much more on the black market). Today's average cigar smoker will find that his (or, increasingly, her) usually mild *claros*, stronger *colorados*, and dark, pungent *maduros* can cost a bundle.

Words descriptive of cigars—including the word *cigar* itself, the ultimate etymology of which is uncertain—are typically Spanish, Spain having been the conduit for the cigar's introduction to Europe. But whence the word *stogie*?

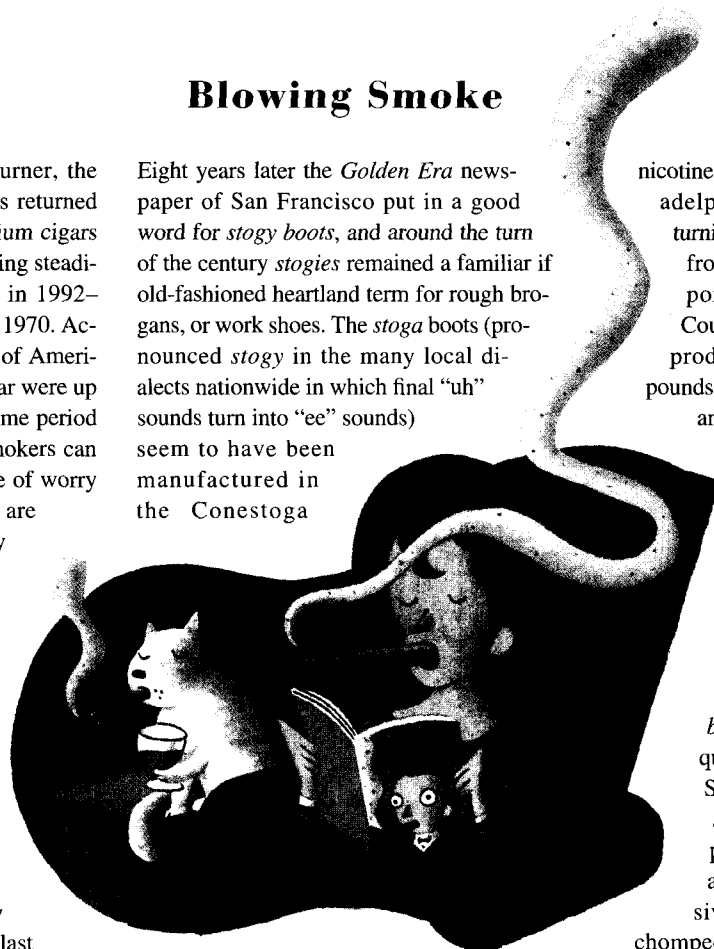
*Stogies* of a different sort were known to American travelers before the California Gold Rush. One diarist noted that in the course of his 1847 trek to the mouth of the Columbia River he had paid \$4.50, an astronomical price at the time, for "a pair of *stoga* shoes, made in one of the Eastern States."

Eight years later the *Golden Era* newspaper of San Francisco put in a good word for *stogy boots*, and around the turn of the century *stogies* remained a familiar if old-fashioned heartland term for rough brogans, or work shoes. The *stoga* boots (pronounced *stogy* in the many local dialects nationwide in which final "uh" sounds turn into "ee" sounds) seem to have been manufactured in the Conestoga

nicotine-delivery system. By 1810 Philadelphia cigarmakers alone were turning out 25 million cigars a year from homegrown as well as imported leaf. In 1860 Lancaster County and the Conestoga Valley produced more than two million pounds of tobacco. *Conestoga* tobacco and the cigars rolled from it were widely regarded as something less than the "sublime" products extolled by Lord Byron; indeed, the so-called "Havana from the land of Penn" became, literally, a butt of jokes. (Mark Twain claimed to prize Pittsburgh-rolled cigars precisely *because* they were vile, and quested for varieties even viler.) Sold as *long nines* and *short sixes*, popular lengths of the period, the *stogy* cigar did have an advantage: it was inexpensive. *Stogies* could be fired up,

chomped on, enjoyed after a fashion, and stubbed out at a price of four for a penny, or roughly the equivalent of a quarter apiece at 1996 prices. These are the cigars that Ulysses S. Grant tends to be holding in photographs by Matthew Brady. Quality cigars were not likely to be called *stogies* in an off-hand way until well into the current century, by which time deprecatory synonyms such as *heater*, *stinker*, *rope*, and eventually *el rope* were available to play the pejorative role.

In the era of Twain and Grant cigar-smoking paraphernalia consisted mainly of a cigar cutter; the cigar itself was lit with a *lucifer* (safety match). Today, at cigar bars and elsewhere, humidors, pocket liners, and fancy lighters abound. The pronunciation "*see-gar*," which calls to mind the once acceptable spelling *segar*, has prompted an entrepreneur to create the *Tee-Gar*, a plastic cigar holder for golfers that, affixed to its own tee, will make sure that no smoke gets in your eyes or "garden chemicals" in your mouth while you spoil a good walk.



#### Investigations of slang by the editor of the Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang

Valley of Pennsylvania, where wainwrights, many of them recent immigrants from the Rhineland, had introduced the one-and-a-half-ton *Conestoga wagon*, drawn by a team of six or eight *Conestoga horses*, as early as 1717. (The *Conestoga* were an Indian tribe living along the Susquehanna River, to which the word *Conestoga* itself, perhaps meaning "muddy waters," would seem to have referred.)

*Conestoga* boots, wagons, horses—all were legendarily strong. Next came cigars. The short-lived Swedish colony in Pennsylvania was cultivating pipe tobacco by 1650, long before the Latin American-rolled *cigarro* had joined the tobacco pipe as a popular

what if my brother  
makes me  
eat a bug?

what if I need X-rays?



what if I'm  
sick of all the  
paperwork?

what if something  
happens on  
vacation?

# what if?

what if my baby comes early?



what if I need to bring my weight  
down because my cholesterol is up?

what if I want a cost effective HMO?

what if my kids need shots?

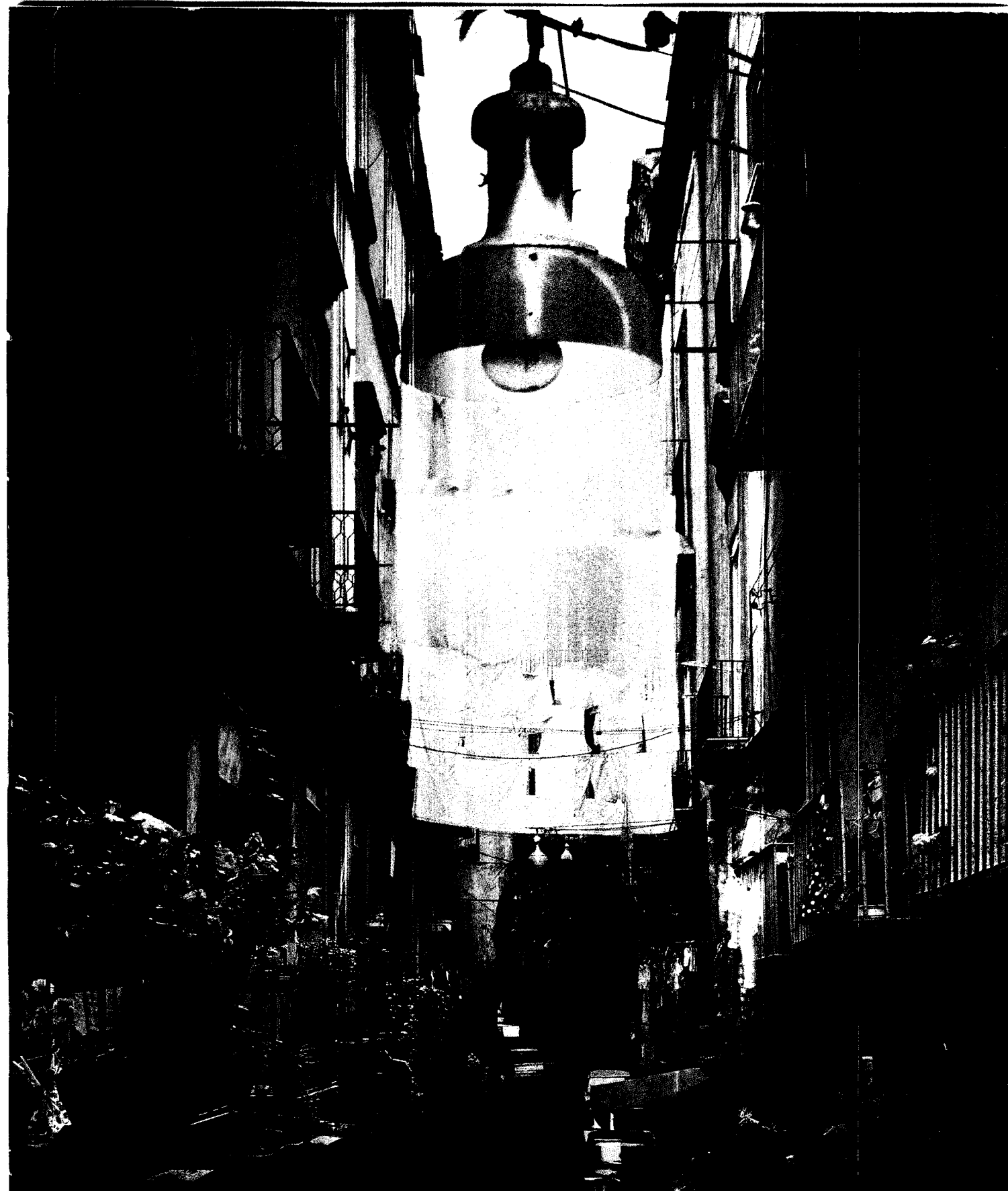
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